

*The  
Long Ago*

by

J. W. WRIGHT









175





HEN said he unto me,  
Go thy way,  
Weigh me the  
weight of the fire,  
Or measure me the  
blast of the wind,  
Or *call me again*  
*the day that is past.*

II Esdras IV: 5





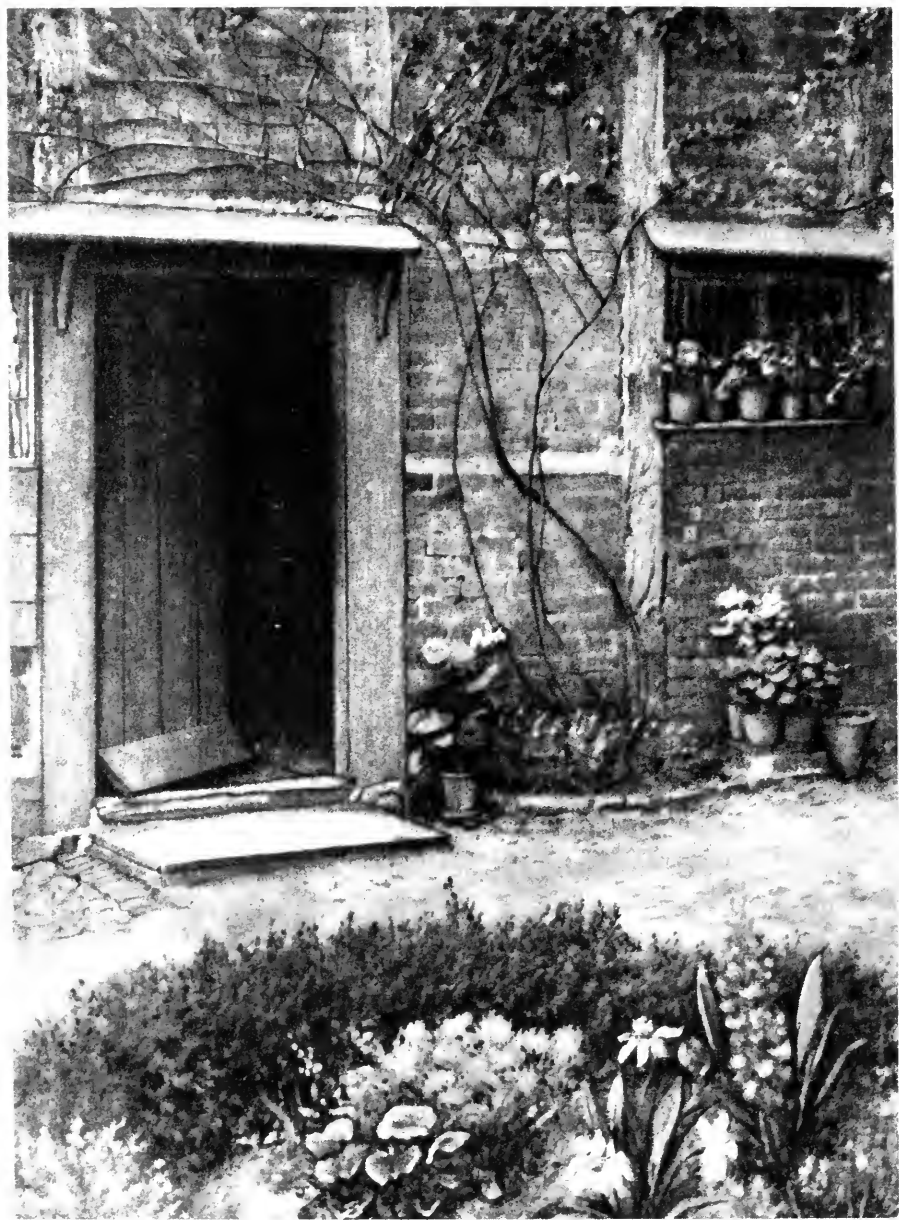


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# THE LONG AGO

by

J W WRIGHT

Author of "*The Glad World*"



Pasadena California

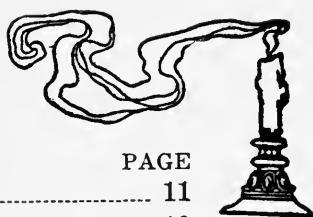
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HE day is done . . . yet we linger here at the window of the private office, alone, in the early evening. Street sounds come surging up to us—the hoarse Voice of the City—a confused blur of noise—clanging trolley-cars, rumbling wagons, and familiar cries—all the varied commotion of the home-going hour when the city's buildings are pouring forth their human tide of laborers into the clogged arteries. We lean against the window-frame, looking across and beyond the myriad roofs, and listening. The world-weariness has touched our temples with gray, and the heaviness of the day's concerns and tumult presses in, presses in, presses in. Yet as we look into the gentle twilight, the throbbing street below slowly changes to a winding country road; the tall buildings fade in the sunset glow until they become only huge elm-trees overtopping a dusty lane; the trolley-gongs are softened and are but the distant tinkle of the homeward herd on the hills . . . and you and I in matchless freedom are once more trudging the Old Dear Road side by side, answering the call of the wondrous Voice of Childhood sounding through the years.







## The Garden



**I**T was the spirit of the garden that crept into my boy-heart and left its fragrance, to endure through the years. What the garden stood for—what it expressed—left a mysterious but certain impress. Grandmother's touch hallowed it and made it a thing apart, and the rare soul of her seemed to be reflected in the Lilies of the Valley that bloomed sweetly year by year in the shady plot under her favorite window. Because the garden was her special province, it expressed her own sturdy, kindly nature.

Little wonder, then, that we cherished it; that I loved to roam idly there feeling the enfoldment of that same protection and loving-kindness which drew me to the shelter of her gingham-aproned lap when the griefs of Boyhood pressed too hard upon me; and that we walked in it so contentedly in the cool of the evening, after the Four O'clocks had folded their purple petals for the night.

## THE LONG AGO

Grandmother's garden, like all real gardens, wasn't just flowers and fragrance.

There was a brick walk leading from the front gate to the sitting-room entrance—red brick, all moss-grown, and with the tiny weeds and grasses pushing up between the bricks. In the garden proper the paths were of earth, bordered and well-defined by inch-wide boards that provided jolly tight-rope practice until grandmother came anxiously out with her oft-repeated: "Willie, don't walk on those boards; you'll break them down."

After the warm spring showers these earth-walks always held tiny mud-puddles where the rain-bleached worms congregated until the robins came that way.

There's something distinctive and individual about the paths in a garden—they either "belong," or they do not. Imagine cement walks in grandmother's garden! Its walks are as much to a garden as its flowers or its birds or its beetles, and express that dear, indescribable intimacy that makes the Phlox a friend and the Johnny-Jump-Up a play-fellow.

## THE GARDEN

High against the brick wall stood the fragrant white Syringa bush—the tallest bloomer in the garden except the great Red Rose that climbed over the entire side of the house, tacked to it by strips of red flannel, and whose blossoms were annually counted and reported to the weekly newspaper.

A good place for angle-worms was under the Snowball bush, where the ground was covered with white petals dropped from the countless blossom-balls that made passers-by stop in admiration.

Still another good digging-ground was in the Lilac corner where the purple and white bushes exhaled their incomparable perfume. Grandmother forbade digging in the flower-beds—it was all right to go into the vegetable garden, but the tender flower-roots must not be exposed to the sun by ruthless boy hands intent only on the quest of bait.

---

Into the lapel of my dress coat She fastened a delicate orchid tonight. It must have cost a pretty penny, at this season—enough, no doubt, to buy the seeds that would reproduce a half-



*"And shining clear and true .  
                  I see her who was the  
Spirit of the Garden."*

## THE GARDEN

dozen of my grandmother's gardens. And as we moved away in the limousine She asked me why I was so silent. She could not know that when she slipped its rare stem into place upon my coat, the long years dropped away—and I stood again where the Yellow Rose, all thorn-covered, lifted its sunny top above the picket fence—plucked its choicest blossom, put it almost apologetically and ashamed into the buttonhole of my jacket—stuffed my hands into my pockets and went whistling down the street, with the yellow rose-tint and the sunlight and the curls on my child head all shining in harmony. The first *boutonniere* of my life—from the bush that became my *confidant* through all those wondrous years before they packed my trunk and sent me off to college.

To be sure, I loved the bright-faced Pansies which smiled cheerily up at me from their round bed—and the dear old Pinks, of a strange fragrance all their own—and the Sweet William, and even the grewsome Bleeding Heart that drooped so sad and forlorn in its allotted corner. Yet it is significant that Her costly hot-house bloom took me straight back over memory's

## THE LONG AGO

pathway to that simple yellow rose-bush by the fence.

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Tonight, with the forgotten orchid in my lapel, and all the weight of the great struggle lying heavy against my heart, I stand where the night-fog veils the scraggly eucalyptus, and the dense silence blots out all the noises that have intervened between the Then and the Now—and I can see again the gorgeous Peonies, pink and white, where they toss their shaggy heads, and gather as of old the flaming Cock's Comb by the little path. I hear the honey-bees droning in the Crab Apple tree by the back gate, and watch the robins crowding the branches of the Mountain Ash, where the bright red berries cluster. I see the terrible bumble-bee bear down the Poppy on its slender stem and go buzzing threateningly away, all pollen-covered.

And shining clear and true through the mist I see her who was the Spirit of the Garden. There she stands, on the broad step beside the bed where the Lilies of the Valley grew, leaning firmly upon her one crutch, looking out across her garden to each loved group of her flower-

## THE GARDEN

friends—smiling upon them as she did each day through fifty years—turning at last into the house and taking with her, in her heart, the glory of the Hollyhocks against the brick wall, the perfume of the Narcissus in the border, the wing-song of the humming-bird among the Honeysuckle, and the warmth of the glad June sunshine.







## The River

THE river wasn't a big river as I look back at it now, yet it was wide and wandering and deep, and flowed quietly along through a wonderful Middle West valley, dividing the Little Old Town geographically and socially. Its shores furnished such a boy playground as never was known anywhere else in all the world—for it was a gentle river, a kindly playfellow, an understanding friend; and it seemed to fairly thrill in responsive glee when I plunged, naked and untamed, beneath the eddying waters of the swimming-hole under the overhanging wild-plum tree.

## THE LONG AGO

Its banks, curving in a semi-circle around the village, marked the borders of the whole wide world. There were other rivers, other villages, other lands somewhere—all with strange, queer names—existing only in the geographies to worry little children. The real world, and all the really, truly folk and things, were along the far-stretching banks of this our river.

Down by the flats, where a tiny creek widened to a miniature swamp and emptied its placid waters into the main stream, the red-wing blackbirds sounded their strange cry among the cat-tails and the bull-rushes, and the frogs croaked in ceaseless and reverberant chorus. There the catfish were ever hungry after dark, and the night was broken by the glare of torches along the little bridge or in a group of boats where fisher-lads kept close watch upon their corks.

Far below The Dam, where the changeful current had left a wide sand-bar and a great tree-trunk stretched its fallen length across from the shore to the water's edge, the mud-turtles basked in the sunshine, and, at the approach of Boyhood, glided or splashed to the

## THE RIVER

safety of the water.

The banks of the river were a deep and silent jungle wherein all manner of wild beasts and birds were hunted; its bosom was the vasty deep out upon which our cherished argosies were sent. And how often their prows were unexpectedly turned by some new current into mid-stream; sometimes saved by an assortment of missiles breathlessly thrown to the far side, to bring them, wave-washed, back to us; sometimes, alas, swept mercilessly out to depths where only the eye and childish grief could follow them over the big dam to certain wreckage in the whirlpools below, but even then not abandoned until the shore had been patrolled for salvage as far as courage held out.

---

Let's go back to the banks of our beloved river, you and I—and get up early in the morning and run to the riffles near the old cooper-shop and catch a bucket of shiners and chubs, and then hurry on to Boomer's dam—or 'way upstream above the Island where we used to have the Sunday-school picnics—or maybe just stay at the in-town dam near the flour-mills and



*“ . . . It was a gentle  
river, a kindly playfellow,  
an understanding friend.”*

## THE RIVER

the saw-mills where old Shoemaker John used to catch so many big ones—fat, yellow pike and broad black-bass. We will climb high up on the mist-soaked timbers of the mill-race and settle ourselves contentedly—with the spray moistening our faces and the warm sun browning our hands—and the heavy pounding of falling waters sounding in our ears so melodiously and so sweetly. Lazily, drowsily we'll hold a bamboo pole and guide our shiner through the foam-crowned eddies of the whirlpool, awaiting the flash of a golden side or a lusty tug at the line; or dreamily watch a long, narrow stream of shavings and sawdust, loosed from the opposite planing-mill, float away on the current.

Here, in the dear dream-days, the conquering of the world was a simple matter; for through the mist-prisms that rose from the foaming waters below the dam only rainbows could be seen—and there were Youth and the Springtime, and the new-born flowers and matting birds, and The River. . . . .

And when the sun is low we'll wind our poles, at the end of a rare day—one that cannot

## THE LONG AGO

die with the sunset, but that will live so long as Memory is. Tonight we need not trudge over the fields toward home, in happy weariness, to Her who waited and watched for us at the window, peering through the gathering dusk until the anxious heart was stilled by the sight of tired little legs dragging down the street past the postoffice. We'll stay here in the twilight, and watch the fire-flies light their fitful lamps, and the first stars blinking through the after-glow; and when the night drops down see the black bats careening weirdly across the moon. . . . And we'll stretch out again on the wild grass—soothed by the fragrance of the May-apple and the violets, and the touch of the night-wind. . . . How still it is . . . and The River doesn't seem to sound so loud when your head's on the ground—and your eyes are closed—and you're listening to the far, far, far-off lullaby of tumbling waters—and you're a bit tired, perhaps . . . a bit tired. . . .

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Somehow The River never terrified me.

(It did mother, however!)

Perhaps it brought no fear to me because it

## THE RIVER

flowed so gently and so helpfully through such a wonderful valley of peace and plenty. Even in its austere winter aspect, with its tree-banks bare of leaves and its snow-and-ice-bound setting, it rejoiced me.

Teams of big horses and wagons and scores of men worked busily upon its frozen surface, sawing and cutting and packing ice in the big wooden houses along the banks.

Always there was enough wind for an ice-boat or a skate-sail, or to send a fellow swiftly along when promises to mother were forgotten and an unbuttoned coat was held outstretched to catch the breeze.

At night the torches and bonfires flickered and glowed where skaters sent the merry noises of their revelry afloat through the crisp air as they dodged steel-footed in and out among the huts of the winter fishermen.

Perhaps I loved the winter river because I knew that beneath its forbidding surface there was the life of my loved lilies, and because I knew that all in good time the real river—our river—would be restored to us again, alive and joyous and unchanged.

## THE LONG AGO

One day, when first the tiny rivulets started to run from the bottom of the snow-drifts, The River suddenly unloosed its artillery and the crisp air re-echoed with the booming that proclaimed the breaking-up of the ice. Great crowds of people thronged the banks, wondering if the bridge would go out or would stand the strain of pounding ice-cakes. The unmistakable note of a robin sounded from somewhere. Great dark spots began to show in the white ice-ribbon that wound through the valley. The air at sundown had lost its sting.

Day by day the breaking-up continued until at last the blessed stream was clear—the bass jumped hungry to the fly—the daffodils and the violets sprang from beneath their wet leaf-blankets—and all the world joined the birds in one glad song of emancipation and joy.

---

Above the town, just beyond the red iron bridge, the river made a great bend and widened into a lake where the banks were willow-grown, and reeds and rushes and grasses and lily-pads pushed far out into mid-stream, leaving only a narrow channel of clear water.



## THE RIVER

To the Big Bend our canoe glided often, paddling lazily along and going far up-stream to drift back with the current.

Arms bared to the shoulder, we reached deep beneath the surface to bring up the long-stemmed water-lilies—the great 'white' blossoms, and the queer little yellow-and-black ones.

Like a bright-eyed sprite the tiny marsh-wren flitted among the rushes, and the musk-rat built strange reed-castles at the water's edge.

The lace-winged dragon-fly following our boat darted from side to side, or poised in air, or alighted on the dripping blade of our paddle when it rested for a moment across our knees.

Among the grasses the wind-harps played weird melodies which only Boyhood could interpret.

In this place The River sang its love-songs, and sent forth an answering note to the vast harmonious blending of blue sky and golden day and incense-heavy air and the glad songs of birds.

And here at this tranquil bend The River seemed to be the self-same river of the old,

## THE LONG AGO

loved hymn we sang so often in the Little White Church on the Corner—that river which “flows by the throne of God”; fulfilling the promise of the ancient prophet of prophets and bringing “peace . . . like a river, and glory . . . like a flowing stream.”



## Christmas

WE always used grandmother's stocking—because it was the biggest one in the family, much larger than mother's, and somehow it seemed able to stretch more than hers. There was so much room in the foot, too—a chance for all sorts of packages.

There was a carpet-covered couch against the flowered wall in one corner of the parlor. Between the foot of it and the chimney, was the door into our bedroom. I always hung my stocking at the side of the door nearest the couch, on the theory, well-defined in my mind with each recurring Christmas, that if by any chance Santa Claus brought me more than he could get into the stocking, he could pile the overflow on the couch. And he always did!

It may seem strange that a lad who seldom heard even the third getting-up call in the morn-

## THE LONG AGO

ing should have awakened without any calling once a year—or that his red-night-gowned figure should have leaped from the depths of his feather bed—or that he should have crept breathless and fearful to the door where the stocking hung. Notwithstanding the ripe experience of years past, when each Christmas found the generous stocking stuffed with good things, there was always the chance that Santa Claus might have forgotten, this year—or that he might have miscalculated his supply and not have enough to go 'round—or that he had not been correctly informed as to just what you wanted—or that some accident might have befallen his reindeer-and-sleigh to detain him until the grey dawn of Christmas morning stopped his work and sent him scurrying back to his toy kingdom to await another Yule-tide.

And so, in the fearful silence and darkness of that early hour, with stilled breath and heart beating so loudly you thought it would awaken everyone in the house, you softly opened the door—poked your arm through—felt around where the stocking ought to be, but with a great sinking in your heart when you didn't find it the

## CHRISTMAS

first time—and finally your chubby fist clutched the misshapen, lumpy, bulging fabric that proclaimed a generous Santa Claus.

Yes, it was there!

That was enough for the moment. A hurried climb back into the warm bed—and then interminable years of waiting until your attuned ear caught the first sounds of grandmother's dressing in her nearby bedroom, and the first gleam of winter daylight permitted you to see the wondrous stocking and the array of packages on the sofa. It was beyond human strength to refrain from just one look. But alas! The sight of a dapple-grey rocking-horse with silken mane and flowing tail was too much, and the next moment you were in the room with your arms around his arched neck, while peals of unrestrained joy brought the whole family to the scene. Then it was that mother gathered you into her lap, and wrapped her skirt about your bare legs, and held your trembling form tight in her arms until you promised to get dressed if they would open just one package—the big one on the end of the sofa. After that there was always “just one more, mother,

## THE LONG AGO

please!" and by that time the base burner was warming up and you were on the floor in the middle of the discarded wrapping-paper, uncovering each wondrous package down to the very last—the very, very last—in the very toe of the stocking—the big round one that you were sure was a real league ball but which proved to be nothing but an orange!

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There is a new high-power motor in my garage. It came to me yesterday—Christmas. It is very beautiful, and it cost a great deal of money, a very great deal. If we were in the Little Old Town it would take us all out to Aunt Em's farm in ten minutes. (It always took her an hour to drive in with the old spotted white mare.)

I am quite happy to have this wonderful new horse of today, and there is some warmth inside of me as I walk around it in the garage while Henry, its keeper, flicks with his chamois every last vestige of dust from its shiny sides.

And yet . . . how gladly would I give it up if only I could have been in my feather bed last night—if I could have awakened at day-

## CHRISTMAS

break and crept softly, red-flanneled and barefooted, to the parlor door—if I could have groped for grandmother's stocking and felt its lumpy shape respond to my eager touch—and if I could have known the thrill of that dapple-grey rocking-horse when I flung my arms around its neck and buried my face in its silken mane!







## My First Sweetheart

YOU think she was a bit of a girl about my own age all dressed in pretty white things and pink stockings and a great big bow of ribbon in her hair; and that I hung around her front gate, walked to school with her, brought her handsfull of hastily-snatched but consecrated blossoms, shared my apple with her, and all that sort of conventional and childish procedure. Not at all.

To be sure, there were certain children, possibly a child, who seemed more worthy than others of my special consideration—but my attitude toward them, or her, never reached adoration and true love. It was well enough to meet them, or her, at candy-pulls, and go so far as to play clap-in-and-clap-out, or drop-the-pillow, or postoffice. One might even abandon his fellows to their rough Hallowe'en pranks or suffer himself to stay indoors and make taffy or bob apples or otherwise devote himself to the entertainment of them, or her, out of re-

## THE LONG AGO

spect to the wishes, or possibly the express commands, of scheming parents. Hayrides, too, were more or less endurable occasionally—when the holding of hands was a measure of safety and only such protection as any gentleman would expect to offer a lady. Such affairs of the heart, as our elders misnamed them when judging things by externals and wholly unaware of one's inner feelings, were well enough in their way and only a phase of life to be met and endured and recovered from, like the measles or chicken-pox, or mumps.

But a *man's* love was not a thing to be frittered away upon children, no matter how white and pink and lovely they might be. It is only given a man to love once in his lifetime, and when that supreme passion occurs prematurely, say at eight years of age or thereabouts, it must be worthily bestowed, as becomes a man.

By what strange whim of Nature manhood had been thrust upon me at so tender an age, I did not know and did not stop to enquire. I only regarded it as very fortunate for me that maturity and capacity for the grand passion had been bestowed upon me at the same mo-

## MY FIRST SWEETHEART

ment that She came into my life. I knew that it was She the moment we met—love at first sight, indeed, and instantaneous capitulation.

It was not her transcendent personal beauty that made me love her—although I took great pride in that, as one might of a handsome and creditable possession. I adored her wonderful hair, her eyes, her smiling lips, her every feature—and worshipped and haunted the ground she walked on. It was her sweet presence, the unspeakable joy of her companionship, and the certainty that she reciprocated my love, that bound me to her inextricably.

There were blissful walks hand-in-hand beside the close-trimmed evergreen hedges that bordered the brick walks in Auntie Moak's big yard—the hedges where the song-sparrow nested, where a man not yet very tall could, by standing on tiptoe and steadied by Her arm, look down into a nest and see its tiny eggs or its wide-mouthed, worm-expecting fledglings. There were heaven-filled hours in the hammock under the shade of the group of pine-trees in the corner—hours of story-telling and reading, and of a manly head resting so contentedly on

## THE LONG AGO

a womanly shoulder. There were early-evening sittings in Her lap, and precious cuddling into Her arms, and the warmth of Her cheek against one's hair, until one sighed and slipped gently off into Slumberland and was put to bed upon the couch until The Folks were ready to go home.

One day they twitted me, in her presence, about my devotion—and for the first time in my life I tasted the bitter cup of Apprehension.

"I'm going to marry Aunt Eliza," I announced. (She wasn't a really-truly aunt, but that's what they let me call her. And it had a ring of possession.)

"Why, you can't do that, Willie," they said. "She's too old for you. Aunt Eliza's twenty, you're only eight. You'll never catch up to her."

Then and there she all unknowingly wrecked my life.

"But I'll wait for you, Willie," she said.

That settled it. I rushed to her arms—those blessed arms that were to be forever my refuge. In a few years, at most, I would be a big man—big enough to claim my promised bride.

## MY FIRST SWEETHEART

Then followed days and days of unstinted and unalloyed bliss. She would wait for me! The wedding was only a matter of a short time—she “had her growth” and I was springing up rapidly—and soon I would catch up to her—and she would wait for me.

With what stoicism I tolerated and suffered myself to go to “parties” thereafter! Candy-pulls and such palled on me. Hallowe’en was for a man’s deeds only—no more apple-bobbing with the girls in the house. “Postoffice” and “drop-the-pillow” were frequently forced upon me, and I went through such ordeals with more or less patience and some show of enjoyment—but my heart had been given elsewhere and forever, and what were all these pink-and-white, ruffled-and-ribboned children to me now. . . .

One afternoon after school, when I went to see her, I found another man there. For a moment it was unbelievable. He was a handsome fellow, pretty well grown as I could see when I measured him with my eye, and apparently a decent sort of a chap as appeared when we were introduced. At first I was undecided whether to shake hands with him or lick him

## THE LONG AGO

then and there and have the thing done with. A second glance reassured me—and I decided to shake hands. For after all, it might not mean anything, his being there. We had a somewhat strained but fairly good time together, the three of us, and I rather liked the fellow, still feeling secure of my own status.

I met this same man at Aunt Eliza's quite frequently thereafter — more often than I thought it necessary or proper for him to be calling on an engaged woman, especially one engaged to me. If I had not had very much the start of him in the matter of time, I should have regarded him as a dangerous rival, but she had promised to wait for me—and I very well knew she loved me—so what had I to fear, no matter how big-and-good-looking he was? One thing I did not like at all—he came from another town. Women are so queer—they hang a halo about a uniform, for instance, or just dote on a chap who is a bit wild, or become hypnotized by The Man From Another Town. But even this did not perturb me—and as the weeks passed and She was still the same toward me, all distrust vanished and I settled back into wedding-day planning.

## MY FIRST SWEETHEART

Not many months afterward She gathered me up into her lap one day and began to talk to me very earnestly about the Other Man. She explained that she had waited several years for me, but I wasn't yet ready to take her, and she was afraid she'd be an old maid before I could catch up to her—whereas the Other Man was all ready right then, and while he wasn't *me* he was a pretty good sort and perhaps she'd better take him while she had the chance and make the best of it. She explained it beautifully—I could not have asked to be more beautifully exterminated. It was perfect and complete. It was my first experience of a broken heart and a blasted faith at one and the same time.

When She started to take down for me the bound volumes of Harper's Weekly that I usually devoured by the hour stretched flat on my tummy on the library floor, I told her I guessed I wouldn't stay any longer today. I permitted myself to be kissed, as usual, at the front door, and I twined my arms around her neck in the old dear way. But as I trotted down the brick walk toward the gate, beside the close-trimmed

## THE LONG AGO

evergreen hedge, for the first time in my life I did not peep between its fragrant branches to find where the song-sparrow nested. When I reached the gate, and heard the creak of its hinges, and the click of its latch as it swung shut behind me, there was no familiar whistle on my lips as I marched sturdily homeward—still wondering what it meant to say you'd "wait for a fellow."

By the time I reached the city park I had found some measure of comfort in remembering that She had promised to give me an important place at the wedding—ring-bearer, or something equally grand.

So I hunted for a chippie's nest in a little fir-tree—and found one all filled with white eggs spotted with brown on the big end. . . . Upon reaching home I was able to eat a little supper.

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Life holds sweethearts many. I have loved much—and numerously; and have been similarly favored. Necessarily, too, life holds bitter moments—and I have not escaped them.



## MY FIRST SWEETHEART

But there is no love like the love of eight for twenty.

And there is no bitterness like that of the moment when you discover that She cannot wait for you, and you see her borne away from you by the Man From Another Town.





## The Great Out Doors

YOU remember, early Saturday morning, you were standing at the cookie-jar. The kitchen was filled with the fragrance of new-cooked cakes. Your mouth was filled with cookies still warm and soft. Just as your hand was reaching for another, a whistle sounded outside. Your hand stopped—you turned—then quickly plunged into the jar again and in an instant you were scurrying across the yard stuffing the last of one cookie into your mouth and two others into your pocket. You grabbed the old bamboo fish-pole from its pegs on the side of the barn and the can of worms underneath the sidewalk, ran almost breathless through the gate to catch up with Jimmie Jones who was waving an imperative "C'mon, hurry up, can't chu!" half-a-block down the street. You both ran as fast as your little legs would

## THE LONG AGO

take you until breath gave out or you reached the last house on the street and saw before you only the wide fields and the big road and the deep woods and the shining river sparkling in the sunlight where the riffles sang their joyous melody of freedom and the Great Out Doors.

All day long, until the sun sinking low in the west bade you turn reluctant feet homeward, you played with your countless loved comrades in the Big Garden—one with them, one of them. You dived with the belted kingfisher into the depths of a shady pool, and swam underwater with its fearless minnows and chubs whose sudden touch you often felt upon your legs. You climbed with the squirrels into the tops of the hickory-trees, play-mates all in the wildwood. You ran with the cottontails through the perfumed fields where the butterflies staggered in the wind. You stretched on your back in the tall grass, and between its waving tops watched the white clouds float across the blue sky and a huge hawk sailing and dipping and mounting on motionless wing. You whistled a low, clear note, and heard the answer from a bird-throat in the thicket. You discovered the

## THE GREAT OUT DOORS

hiding-place of the modest yellow violet, and stretched on your tummy on the mossy bank beside the brook and buried your face in the fragrance of the purple violet bed, lazily swinging your heels in the air while the stream-voice crooned its matchless lullaby and the wood-thrush sang to its mate on the nest.

Here, in our Great Garden that has no walls, are Voices that we know, telling stories that we love in language we both speak and understand—but there is no voice in a round, flat cake of flour, be it ever so nicely browned, be it ever so soft and crumbly, be it ever so thickly sugared.

So if someone will only whistle, and start again the call of the loved voices in the big Out There, how gladly and how quickly we will leave our voiceless cookie-jar, and go!

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You remember, too, the day it rained so hard mother let you stay home from school and your little neighbor came over and you had the wonderful attic all to yourselves. The dark places were an almost impenetrable jungle which you more-or-less boldly explored, shoot-

## THE LONG AGO

ing down huge elephants with wooden guns of your own make and trapping fierce tigers in pits of your own imaginings.

So intent were you in stalking a particularly large beast you had not noticed that the rain had stopped. Suddenly, just as you were aiming straight between the eyes of the onrushing monster which would certainly crush you lifeless beneath his enormous feet if your aim failed, the note of a bluebird rang through the attic, the trill of a robin sounded unmistakably, and a glint of sunshine lightened the gloom. The gun fell from your hands and clattered to the floor, the approaching beast dissolved into thin air, and with it vanished the Land of Make Believe, in the presence of a dripping but glad Reality.

You tumbled noisily downstairs and out into the cool air, in time to hear the last tinkling music of roof-waters draining into tin downspouts and dropping with hollow resonance into the rain-barrel. You watched the purple martins come one by one from beneath their sheltering eaves and soar away into the misty air to join the circling chimney-swifts and dart-

## THE GREAT OUT DOORS

ing barn-swallows in the mazes of a joyous air dance. You smelled the pungent and peculiar fragrance of the big Lombardy poplars, and the perfume exhaled from the white syringa bush in the garden. And even while the rain-mist still moistened your face you saw the clouds breaking and disappearing, and the great rainbow arched to proclaim fair weather, one end unquestionably resting no farther away than the vegetable garden just behind the barn.

In the murky waters of the gutter, running bank-full, you sailed your single-masted argosies hastily built from a shingle pointed at the thin end as best one could with a dull and broken-blade knife and limited time in which to catch the full flood in the street.

You hurried to the big dam just below town to see your little river, swollen and muddy, send its mighty waters over the edge and into the foam-crowned depths below, until the very ground beneath your feet shook and trembled and quivered.

Then you bounded on into the Great Out Doors, heedless of the grass that emptied its water-filled blades into your shoes; heedless,

## THE LONG AGO

too, of the branch that brushed your cheek with its wet hand; heedless of everything except that the songs from countless bird-comrades joining in one glad and mighty chorus called you out, out, out from the sham jungle of Make Believe into the laughing, sun-filled field of Life.

And so, sitting here tonight in our prison-loge seeking on the Make Believe stage a moment's forgetfulness of our own Make Believe living, we would gladly exchange the perfume of milady's roses for one after-rain breath of Lombardy poplars; and all our mighty argosies we send forth so anxiously upon the turbulent sea of the world's trade we would give for a shingle boat, with its stick mast, bobbing merrily over the gutter-flood in the street.

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The Christmas-morning rocking-horse has been ridden fast and far. The pages of the picture-books have been turned forwards and backwards, and pushed aside. The shiny engine and train of cars have steamed over the floor in their little circle and lie wrecked and deserted upon the carpet-roses.



## THE GREAT OUT DOORS

The base-burner glows red, and the room is close and stuffy. You press your nose for a moment against the cold window-pane and look out upon a snow-white world. From Somewhere and Nowhere comes a call—silent, clarification, imperative, compelling. Life is stirring, and you thrill responsive; the world of real things summons, and you answer.

You hurry into cap, mittens and knitted leggins that pull on over your shoes — and plunge shouting through the snow-drift at the door. You mould a snow-ball and hurl it with all your might and main, anywhere, at anything, or at nothing in particular. You scuffle a path through the snow upon the sidewalk, past the kitchen and the meat-house and the barn, the first hardy pioneer to break a trail across that trackless waste. You make zigzags and curves over the white lawn. You watch the fluffy snow-birds crowd about the kitchen door to wait for crumbs that grandma never fails to provide when the snow lies deep. You gather handsfull of glistening snow-diamonds and toss them into the air, to have them blown back into your face.

You make a stout snow-man—a fierce bandit

## THE LONG AGO

to be attacked with long, sharp icicles carefully broken from the house-eaves.

And when the dusk comes creeping over the tree-tops and a woman's voice calls your name from the doorway, you send a last icicle lance into the vanquished snow-bandit, hurl a last snow-ball at his already-disfigured head, make one final scampering circle of the lawn kicking the snow in little clouds before your sturdy legs—and bound regretfully into the vestibule just as mother comes with a broom to brush you off.

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Brother of mine, man of the great, strange world, shall we leave our costly cookie-jar of Today—give up our feverish life of Make Believe—abandon our useless heaped-up treasure that keeps us in a close and stuffy prison—and listen again to the old loved Voices calling to us as they called in the long ago from our wonderful garden in the Great Out Doors. Perhaps we shall find that Something which lived within us then, and by its alchemy dissolve the years until we live again.

Time's furrows in the face are but the writing which tells that we have strayed and have clung too closely to life's cookie-jars and make-

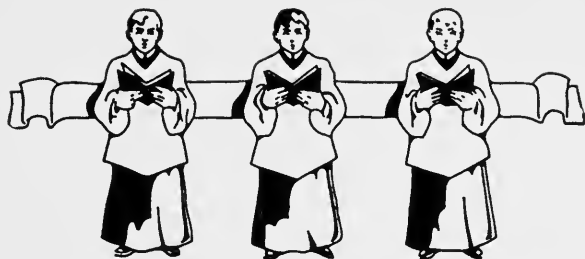
## THE GREAT OUT DOORS

believe jungles and dapple-grey rocking-horses. Let the writing stand—each furrow a deep badge of courage—but let us go back, in our hearts, to plunge with the belted kingfisher into the minnow's pool; to lie on our back in the violet-beds and watch the white clouds sail across a blue sky; to hear the song of the mating wood-thrush; to watch the martins and chimney-swifts and barn-swallows circling in the mazes of their lofty minuet; to sail our shingle boats upon the tumbling gutter stream; and to toss a shower of snow diamonds into the air and feel them blown back into our face.

So shall we find that Youth and Age are one and the same, and both dwell in the heart of man, and both are Life. But only the heart can know it, and only the heart can make it so; for only the heart can love a shingle argosy above a gilded prow.

Cookie-jars and make-believe jungles and dapple-grey rocking-horses ever dwell in close and stuffy rooms where Time chisels deep furrows in men's faces; but there are none such in the heart that throbs responsive to the bird-song and the simple boat on a rainy tide and all the loved Voices that call in our Great Out Doors.





## Grandmother

DO you remember the day she lost her glasses? My, such a commotion! Everybody turned in to hunt for them. Grandmother tramped from one end of the house to the other—we *all* searched—upstairs and down—with no success.

They weren't in the big Bible (we turned the leaves carefully many times—it was the most likely place). They weren't in either of her sewing baskets, nor in the cook-book in the kitchen. Grandfather said she could use one pair of his gold-bowed ones—but shucks! She couldn't see with anything except those old steel-bowed specs!

And then, when she finally sat down and said for the fiftieth time: "I wonder where those specs are!" . . . and put the corner of

## THE LONG AGO

her apron to her eyes—I happened to look up, and there they were—on the top of her head! Been there all the time. . . . And she enjoyed the joke as much as we did—a joke that went around the little town and followed her through all the years within my memory of her.

Sometimes (as often as expedient), you asked her for a penny—never more, and then:

“Now, Willie, what do you want with a penny? I haven’t got it. Run along now.”

“Aw, Gran’ma, don’t make a feller tell what he’s goin’ to buy. I know you got one—look’n see! Please, Gran’ma!”

Slowly the wrinkled hand would fumble for that skirt-pocket which was always so hard to locate—and from its depths there would come the old worn leather wallet with a strap around it—and slowly, (gee! how s-l-o-w-l-y),—after much fumbling, during which you were never *sure* whether you were going to get it or not . . . the penny would come forth and be placed (with seeming reluctance) in the grimy, dirty boy-hand. And usually, just as you reached the door on your hurried way to the

## GRANDMOTHER

nearest candy-shop, she would scare you almost stiff by calling you back, and say:

“Wait a minute, Willie, I found another one that I didn’t know was in here!”

And then you kissed her wrinkled, soft cheek and ran away thinking, after all, grandmother was pretty good.

Good?

Can a woman stick to a man through sixty-odd years—and keep his linen and his broadcloth—and bear him children—and make them into fine wives and husbands—and take them back to her bosom when their mates turn against them—and raise a bunch of riotous grandchildren—and manage such a household as ours with never a complaint—get up at five o’clock every morning and sit up till half-after nine o’clock every night—busy all the time—and nurse her own and other folks’ ailments without a murmur—and submerge self completely in her constant doing for others—can a frail woman so live for eighty-six years and be anything less than good.

And then, at the end of the long journey she was still trudging patiently and gladly along,

## THE LONG AGO

side by side with Grandfather—making less fuss over the years-old pain in her knees than we make now over a splinter in a finger—going daily and uncomplainingly about her manifold duties.

And at night, about an hour before bedtime, she would sit down in the black-upholstered rocker almost behind the big base burner—her first quiet moment in all the long day—head resting against the chair's high back—and doze and listen to the fitful conversation in the room, or to someone reading—giving everything, demanding nothing—as had been her wont all the long years.

And Christmas eve . . . (I'll have to go a bit slow now) . . . On Christmas eve, you remember, when out-of-doors the big snow-flakes were slowly and softly fluttering down, grandmother would get the huge Bible and her treasure-box and bring them up to the little round table covered with its red cloth . . . And you'd get a chair and come up close ('cause you knew what was happening) . . . Then she would read you a wonderful story out of the Bible about the love of God so great that



## GRANDMOTHER

He sent His only-begotten Son to be a Light unto the World . . . and then she'd go down into that little old card-board treasure-box and find some Christmas carols printed in beautiful colors on lace-edged cards folded up just like a fan. She would look down at you over the top of her specs and tell you how the street minstrels in England used to stand out in the snow and sing, and be brought into the house and given the fresh-brewed beer and ale, and a bite to eat—going from house to house all through the early night.

And then she would close her eyes and begin to sing the dear old carols . . . with the tremble in her voice . . . and tapping on the table with her finger-ends in rhythm . . . and Memory's tears dropping on the wrinkled cheeks . . . and the tremulous voice, still soft and sweet, chanting:

*"God rest you, merrie gentlemen!  
Let nothing you dismay;  
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour,  
Was born on Christmas Day!"*

. . . . .  
Aye and amen, dear soul' God rest **you**—  
and He does!





## Jimmy the Lamplighter



THE sun had gone down behind the willows on the river-bank. The night-clouds still carried the crimson-and-purple of the late twilight; and the deep, still waters of the channel gave back the colors and the gleam of the first stars that heralded the night . . . The martins chattered under the eaves, scolding some belated member of the clan who pushed noisily for a lodging-place for the night. The black bat and the darting nighthawk were a-wing, grim spectres of the dusk. The whip-poor-will was crying along the river, and far up-stream the loon called weirdly across the water. . . .

A small boy was sitting on grandfather's front steps, his elbows on his knees, his chin in his palms, seeing familiar objects disappear in the gathering dusk, and watching the stars come out. He was safe, very safe—for grandfather had not gone to the dining-room yet, and his arms could be reached for shelter in two or three bounds, if need be. So it was very pleas-

## THE LONG AGO

ant to sit on the steps and see the little old town fold-up its affairs and settle down for the night.

And more particularly to watch for Jimmy, the Lamplighter.

Far up the street, in the almost-dark place, about where Cobbler John's shoestore ought to be, a point of light flashed suddenly, flickered, and then burned steadily—and in a moment another, across the street . . . Then a space of black, and two more points appeared. Down the street they came in pairs, closely following the retreating day.

And the Little Boy on the Steps knew that it was Jimmy, the Lamplighter, working his way swiftly and silently. If only the dinner-bell would delay awhile The Boy would see old Jimmy light the lamp on grandfather's corner, as he had seen him countless times before.

Then, just as the red glow faded in the West and Night settled down, he came swinging sturdily across the street, his ladder hung on his right shoulder. Quickly, unerringly he placed the ladder against the iron post that sent its metallic ring into the clear night air as the ladder struck, and was three rounds up almost

## JIMMY, THE LAMPLIGHTER

before it settled into position. Then a quick opening of the glass; a struggle with the matches in the wind, a hurried closing of the door, one quick look upward; an arm through the ladder and a swing to the shoulder—and Jimmy the Lamplighter was busily off to his next corner.

Once, in the later years, he came with his new lighter—a splendid brass affair, with smooth wood handle, holding a wax taper that flickered fitfully down the street and marked old Jimmy's pathway through the dusk. Although he could reach up and turn on the gas with the key-slot at the end of the scepter and light it with the taper, all at one time, he ever carried the ladder—for none could tell when or where a burner might need fixing, or there would be other need to climb the post as in the days of the lamp and sulphur-match.

Short of stature, firm of build, was old Jimmy. The night storms of innumerable years had bronzed his skin and furrowed his face. Innumerable years, yes—for so faithful a servant as old Jimmy the Lamplighter was not to be cast away by every caprice of the

## THE LONG AGO

public mind which changed the political aspect of the town council. So Jimmy stayed on through the years and changing administrations—in the sultry heat of the summer nights, or breasting his way through winter's huge snow-drifts, fronting the wind-driven sleet, or dripping through the spring-time rain, his taper hugged tight beneath his thick rubber coat, his matches safe in the depths of an inside pocket.

And tonight, as the Boy still watches, in memory, old Jimmy on his rounds, they are a bit odd, these queer old street lamps that just seem to belong to the night, after the garish blaze of electric signs and the great arc-lights in the shop windows. Yet it shines through the years, this simple lamp of the Long Ago, as it shone through the night of old—a friendly beacon only, the modest servant of an humble race.

. . . . .  
Jimmy's boy Ted, who carried his father's ladder and taper when the good old man laid them down, now nods in his chimney-corner o' nights. But his boy, old Jimmy's grandson, is still a lamplighter—still illuminating the

## JIMMY, THE LAMPLIGHTER

streets of his town, still turning on its lamps when the loon calls weirdly across the river in the gathering dusk.

He bears no ladder nor fitful taper—he dreads no sultry summer heat—he breasts no snowdrifts—he battles against no wind-driven sleet and rain.

There he sits, inside yonder great brick building, his chair tipped back against the wall, reading the evening paper while the giant wheels of the dynamo purr softly and steadily. He lowers his paper—looks at the clock—then out into the early twilight . . . then slowly turns to the wall, pushes a bit of a button, takes up his paper again, and goes on with his reading—while a thousand lights burn white through the city! . . .

Ah, Jimmy, Jimmy! the world is all awry, man! Your son's son lights his thousand lamps in a flash that's no more than the puff of wind that used to blow your match out when you stood on your ladder and lighted one!







## The Ancient Omnibus

THE odor of it is as pungent in my nostrils, as unique and as unforgettable as the enduring smell of the circus. The peculiar fragrance of the omnibus was like the old 'bus itself—individual, wholly unlike anything else, indescribable, unmistakable, incisive.

After you had been away from the Little Old Town for awhile, and had come back, the old railroad station with its familiar group of idlers did not specially thrill you as you stepped from the train; neither did the sight of the town buildings in the distance. But the moment you climbed into the rear of Barney's old 'bus, felt it sway as he swung himself up to the high seat

## THE LONG AGO

and the impatient horses started off almost before he had landed, and felt the jar as he pulled the leather strap that closed the door with a bang—and smelled the ancient perfume of that musty old vehicle, you felt at home! Perhaps it was really the sense of being so near home and hurrying nearer that made you feel at home; perhaps it was the familiar figure of old Barney, who had driven you to and from the station through countless years; but the thing that crystalized your varied emotions and concentrated your scattered feelings into the one sensation that can only be described as “feeling at home” was the musty fragrance that greeted you when you entered Barney’s old ’bus.

Its carpet-covered cushions, with the stuffing sticking through in places, had received the dust of many summers and had been wet by the snows of many winters sifting through the cracks of the window-frames and the little red-and-blue-glass panes above. They had held bodies of all nationalities, dressed in all manner of garments, and of widely varying degrees of cleanliness. They had rested the feet of toilers and idlers, and often the heads of sober folk and otherwise. And the brushing that

## THE ANCIENT OMNIBUS

Barney gave them now and then was a mere formality—not enough to change their deep-down nature.

Up in front, in a boxed place made for the purpose, was a kerosene lamp. The glass door in front of it was lettered with the time of arrival and departure of trains, and the modest advertisement of the town jeweler. As the old 'bus rumbled and swayed and bumped over the roads, the lamp flared and flickered, now flaming high into its chimney, now almost jolted out, and often it snuffed out entirely as if weary of the struggle to burn decently and in order over so rugged a path—as the lamp of many a life burns through the long years. The soot-dimmed top of the lamp-chimney and the dingy glass door in front, threw a weird half-light into the old 'bus as it plunged and reeled through the black night under overhanging elm-boughs.

The bottom of the 'bus was straw-covered, with a layer of fresh hay on top. Sometimes the numb fingers would drop the nickle in the straw instead of in the slot of the fare-box up front—and it was "lost and gone forever," thereafter.

## THE LONG AGO

Countless feet brought countless varieties of dirt through countless years into the straw and hay on the floor of the old 'bus. The top layer of hay, and perhaps a portion off the top of the straw, was removed occasionally—but it is doubtful if the lowest stratum of straw ever changed with the changeful years. As heavy boots tramped down the floor-covering, a little more straw, then a little more hay, was sprinkled on top—and it was clean again.

Little wonder that the pungent fragrance of the old 'bus is wafted across the intervening years, unchanged, undimmed, unique. The carpet-covered cushions exhaled their own peculiar smell—the smoky oil lamp in the front box gave forth its kind, different but no less forceful—the downtrodden straw-and-hay sent up its special distillation, not like anything else and of strength befitting its hard work—and the blending of these smells, together with tobacco fumes, produced that full, rich, ripe and unanalyzable odor that made the returning traveler settle back into a corner of the 'bus, stretch his feet upon its carpet cushions and sigh: "Home at last!"

## THE ANCIENT OMNIBUS

Do you remember—or can you possibly forget—how cold that 'bus was in winter? The outdoors was cold enough—when it frosted your ears and bit your nose and whitened Barney's moustache when he breathed. But it was midsummer compared to the inside of that old 'bus! The breath of the passengers formed a thick cloud, like smoke. Frost covered the window-panes a half-inch thick. The cold wind blew in through window-cracks, door-frame and under the floor. The wheels (Barney never put runners on, no matter how fine the sleighing) screeched and shrieked over the snow-packed streets like the wail of a lost soul. The straw, placed there for comfort was the coldest thing in the 'bus, notwithstanding you stamped, and kicked your feet together, until they got so cold and sore that you couldn't stand it to have them touch each other again. The senses became dull and numb—and you finally huddled into your garments expecting to perish and careless of the fact. Just as you had given up all hope and were awaiting the end, you dimly felt the horses slow down to a walk, heard Barney's sharp command ring out upon the frozen

## THE LONG AGO

air, saw the horses' heads almost come into the window as they swung to make the turn, and then felt the 'bus backing, backing, backing until . . . bang and bump! It hit the edge of the sidewalk a jolt that almost bounced you and your baggage into the waiting arms of the family on the porch!

. . . . .  
When I come back from a trip nowadays, there is the big, comfortable touring-car awaiting me, with Henry, its keeper, silent and respectful and efficient. We slip away softly and noiselessly and evenly, joltless and jarless and bumpless. If the winter is here, Henry has the top on and the heater going inside, and Milady's perfume is in the cushions and the window-hangings. It is all very complete and perfect and comfortable.

Yet somehow, today, I am wishing that it had been Barney at the station, coming across the platform with arms outstretched to meet me, a grin of delight on his bronzed face, the ring of deep-hearted welcome in his voice—I am wishing that I could climb up the back steps of the old 'bus, feel it jar as Barney slammed

## THE ANCIENT OMNIBUS

the door and sway as he clambered on top—and today I would gladly give-up Milady's perfumed curtains of silk if I could fill my nostrils with the odor of Barney's old 'bus and feel that same peace and comfort and joy that I knew when I settled back on those carpet-covered seats and sighed: "Home at last!"







## Butter, Eggs, Ducks, Geese

**I**T seems mighty convenient to telephone your grocer to send up a pound of butter and have it come all squeezed tight into a nice square-cornered cardboard box whose bright and multi-colored label assures you that the butter has been properly deodorized, fumigated, washed, sterilized, antisepticized and conforms in every other respect to the Food and Drugs Act, Serial 1762973-A. You read the label again and feel reasonably safe at meals.

Huh! Precious little grandmother knew about *that* kind of butter!

Hers came in a basket—a great big worn-brown-and-shiny, round bottom, willow basket, hand-woven. It didn't come in any white-and-gold delivery wagon, either. It was delivered

## THE LONG AGO

by a round-faced, rosy-cheeked, gingham-gowned picture of health, whose apron-strings barely met around the middle—for Frau Hummel brought it herself—after having first milked the cows with her own hands and wielded the churning-stick with her own stout arms. She had the butter all covered up with fresh, sweet, white-linen cloths—and hand-moulded into big rolls—each roll wrapped in its own immaculate cloth—and when that cloth was slowly pulled away so that grandmother could stick the point of a knife in the butter and test it on her tongue, you could see the white salt all over the roll—and even the imprint of the cloth-threads . . . Good? . . . Why, you could eat it without bread!

“What else have you got today, Mrs. Hummel?” (Grandmother never could say “Frau”—and as if she didn’t *know* what else was in the basket!)

“Vell, Mrs. Van, dere is meppe some eks, und a dook—und also dere is left von fine stuffed geese.”

So the cloth covering was rolled farther back—and the 3-dozen eggs were gently taken

## BUTTER, EGGS, DUCKS, GEESE

out and put in the old tin egg-bucket—and just then grandfather came in and lifted tenderly out of the basket one of those wonderful geese “stuffed” with good food in a dark cellar until fat enough for market. . . . Ever have a toothful of that kind of goose-breast or second joint? . . . No? . . . Your life is yet incomplete—you have something to live for! . . . Goodness me! I *can't* describe it! . . . How can a fellow tell about such things . . . It's like—well, it's like Frau Hummel's “stuffed” goose, that's all!

And then it was weighed on the old balances, or steels—(no, I don't mean scales!)—steelyards, you know—a long-armed affair with a pear-shaped chunk of iron at one end and a hook at the other and a handle somewhere in between at the center-of-gravity, or some such place. . . . Anyway, they gave an honest pound, which is perhaps another respect in which they were different.

Then the ducks, too, were unwrapped from their white cloths and weighed—usually a pair of them—and the old willow basket had nothing left but its bundle of cloths when Frau Hum-

## THE LONG AGO

mel started out again on her 10-mile walk to the farm.

Whenever I see a glassy-eyed, feather-headed, cold-storage chicken half plucked and discolored hanging in a present-day butcher-shop accumulating dust—or a scrawny duck almost popping through its skin—I think of Frau Hummel and her willow basket. . . .

But Frau Hummel isn't here now—and they don't build ducks and geese like her's any more—and her old willow basket is probably in some collection, while we use these machine-made things that fall to pieces when you accidentally stub your toe against them in the cellar. . . . We are hurrying along so fast that we don't see anything until it's cooked and served. . . . We just use the phone and let them send us any old thing that they can charge on a bill.

But in those days grandfather and grandmother inspected everything—and it just *had* to be good—and there weren't any trusts—or eggs of various grades from just eggs to strictly fresh eggs and on down to eggs guaranteed to boil without crowing. Every Frau Hummel in the country wanted the Van Alstyne trade—

## BUTTER, EGGS, DUCKS, GEESE

and Frau Hummel knew it—and she never brought anything to that back kitchen door unless it was perfect of its kind.

No wonder grandfather lived to be 92 and grandmother 86—in good health and spirits to the last!





## Cobbler John

COBBLER JOHN, master shoe-maker and mender, and the greatest fisherman on the river, silently pegged boots on his bench surrounded by his assortment of knives and things. If a fellow could only get a knife as sharp as one of his!

I used to wonder how he caught so many fish and such whopping big ones. He never used a jointed rod or a reel or more line than the length of his ancient bamboo pole, while I had every modern device, even to three spoon-hooks.

But now I think I understand it.

He fished just as he worked—silently, steadily, ever fishing to catch fish, watching every change of water and weather, never diverted by some new bird-note on the bank or the faces and animals that formed in the passing clouds.

He made good boots because he punched

## THE LONG AGO

the awl-holes and drove home the wooden pegs with his short, strong hammer hour after hour while the daylight lasted and even into the early dusk, stopping only to scrutinize the incoming shoe-wrecks and make a price on the job. And so, too, he fished—as purposeful as he pegged—and that was all he professed to do—just work when he worked and fish when he fished.

Perhaps, in the evening, alone with his wife in the little home, he practiced on his slide trombone—but that was the spiritual side of his nature, well concealed from all the world except his few long-suffering neighbors.

So day by day he kept dropping the quarters and half-dollars into his little tin box, spending fewer than he received, pegging on contentedly; and betimes he fished the river in the same way, doing the little things while I dreamed big ones.

If only someone had taught me the lesson of Cobbler John!





## The Little White Church

IT was strictly orthodox inside, but not outside—for it had no steeple. The steeple-base was there, but the spire was lacking—as were the spire funds. So they gave it a simple round dome, put a bell in it, and one day when John Hardie, the venerable Scotch sexton, grasped the new rope in his knotty hands and bent arms and body to his task, the bell sent forth its summons, the congregation filed into the building and began worship as fervently, no doubt, as if the stubby dome had been a high-reared spire over-topping the nearby elms.

The church was white, with green shutters. It stood on a corner across from the city park—the park that occupied a whole square and had diagonal paths connecting its corners, with a wobbly wooden turnstile at each entrance.

## THE LONG AGO

Sunday morning the carriages and wagons came one by one and found each its place at the long hitching-rack or at one of the several hitching-posts, or Dobbin stood in the shade of a tree, a leather strap snapped into his bit-ring, and an iron weight at the other end.

Sometimes a trusted animal waited patiently, head down, and immovable, untied and free except for his own sense of duty which fastened him to his special spot more relentlessly than any post or iron disk could do. No sound or movement from him but an occasional shiver under his blanket in winter and a swishing of his tail in summer when the flies bothered, until the first worshippers appeared on the church steps after service; then a lift of the head, a thrusting forward of his ears, and one gentle, happy neigh to tell that he had remained faithful to his trust and was ready for home and his boxstall in the barn.

The untied horse made a deep impression upon my boy mind. There were so few of him—and I could not understand it then. Most of the horses had to be tied. The high-spirited ones could go faster and looked grander—but

## THE LITTLE WHITE CHURCH

they made a lot of trouble. They were forever getting the reins under their feet, or twisting around to see what was going on until they nearly upset the buggy, or chewing the top of the hitching-post in spite of its protective wrapping of wire, or working their blankets off onto the ground. And the greatest puzzle of all to me—then—was that the high-spirited ones received the most flattery and attention, while the trusted and faithful one was little noticed—taken as a matter of course.

It seemed to me I'd rather be an untied horse—there was something fine about being trusted and standing with no other leash than a master's faith.

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After service there was the hum of happy visiting among friends and neighbors—perhaps, only perhaps, to stand a moment in the glory of a new shawl or bonnet, a new suit or shiny silk stovepipe hat. Some always wanted to speak to the minister, descended from his pulpit to mingle with his flock. So slowly did the congregation disperse—for the country-folk and town-people seldom met except at church, and

## THE LONG AGO

there were many things in the week's life to talk about—that impatient Hardie, the sexton, fidgetted with his keys and made no secret of his opinion that visiting should be done on week-days and not keep a good man from his Sunday dinner.

There was more to the Little White Church than just a spireless building with green shutters and a fervent sermon within. There was the frequent oyster supper of the Clover Club—the church's entertainment feature that welded the members into more or less social unity, and incidently, or chiefly, raised funds to keep things going. You remember those suppers, don't you—the steaming oyster stew and a pickle and some odds and ends contributed by willing hands and hearts—all for twenty-five cents, for the benefit of the Salary Fund. No doubt you recited a "piece" at some of these functions, or sang "Annie Laurie" or "The Last Rose of Summer," or played the piano or waited on table.

Perhaps you can recall how you started in the Sunday-school and gradually grew into a promotion as usher and passed the plate for

## THE LITTLE WHITE CHURCH

collection—until you were finally selected for a place in the choir and thereby reached the very pinnacle of achievement. Will you ever forget the peculiar sensation—it would have been a thrill in any other place than that solemn church—as your shaking knees bore you uncertainly up the steps to the choir box, and you faced that assemblage of folk and for the first time looked down upon their upturned eyes, eyes concentrated just upon you—and you could almost hear them whispering to a neighbor in the pew: “Well, well! If that ain’t Jamie Tomkins up there in the choir, and him only a babe in arms a while back!”

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And the Sunday-school picnic—my, my, how the memories come thronging! I never see a calf in a pasture that I don’t remember the veal loaf of those Sunday-school picnics! There was never enough veal loaf—I don’t believe I ever had enough of it, or will ever get enough—for they don’t make it quite the same now as it was then. In the Sunday-school picnic time I ever wanted more, and there was none. Today, when I can have the whole loaf if I want

## THE LONG AGO

it, it doesn't taste the same, and I don't want it. As I remember, there was never enough of anything in those days and at those picnics except bread and butter—and who wanted bread and butter at a Sunday-school picnic! . . . It seemed to me that the day of the Sunday-school picnic must have been always fixed by the farmers who wanted rain. The unfailing coincidence of rain-and-picnics left no other conclusion possible. . . . I have tried bravely to live down my resentment toward those who dated the Sunday-school picnic on a rainy day, and at the annual and inevitable insufficiency of veal loaf in spite of my direct suggestions on the subject—but I find it hard, very hard.

. . . . .

Yet shining through the years there glows a vision that compensates in generous measure and that lives as vivid and effulgent and sparkling today as it shone in the long ago. Right this minute I can feel the expectancy and thrill of that moment when on Christmas Eve I pushed and crowded my way with innumerable companions through the big front doors of the church and gazed enraptured upon the huge

## THE LITTLE WHITE CHURCH

Christmas-tree uplifted from the platform; its branches festooned with yards and yards of white popcorn strings; its green mass alight with candles held by tin candlesticks with a ball beneath for a balance; glittering tinsel sparkling amid the cotton-snow on its limbs; pink-gauze, candy-filled stockings dangling everywhere—and at the very tip of the tree, almost touching the ceiling, there gleamed a wonderful star, the star of Bethlehem that lighted the watchful shepherds on their pilgrimage to the blessed cradle in the manger.

On the platform, under the tree's spreading lower boughs, were large packages, too weighty to be suspended. Next came the lesser ones that bent the twigs where they were tied; and the small packages that might be a watch or a ring or a new silver dollar, or almost any cherished hope, hung in tantalizing profusion away up to the uppermost branches.

The preliminary "exercises" — recitations and "pieces" and songs and such like—were almost unendurable, with the possible exception of "The night before Christmas when all through the house not a creature was stirring,

## THE LONG AGO

not even a mouse.” Years and ages and eons seemed to pass before a jingle of sleigh bells and a tramping of feet announced the arrival of a wonderful and really-truly Santa Claus—his pack on his back, snow on his red coat, and unquestionably a reindeer sleigh waiting for him on the roof to bear him on his way when he had finished his work with us. Breathless, rigid, almost tearful, we waited and watched as one by one the packages were lifted from the floor or unfastened from the tree and the names they bore were called out. Could it be possible that there was no package there for me—that my name would not resound through that crowded room? . . . Suddenly it came—my own name—only to find me faint with joy, frozen to my seat with the intensity of my happiness, until I revived enough to feel Aunt Em poke me and hear her say: “Hurry, hurry, Jamie, run along now quick and get your present!

. . . . .  
Christmas, and the tree on Christmas Eve at the Little White Church on the Corner! Through the down-fluttering snow-storm of



## THE LITTLE WHITE CHURCH

greetings-cards of Today I see your wide-spreading branches and tapered form crowded with love-gifts and glowing with light. I can still feel the warmth of your gladsome festival and taste the sweet illusion of your red-coated Santa Claus . . . and gleaming through the mists that intervene between the Then and the Now, there blazes aloft in the dark night of things the Star of Bethlehem, ever leading to the manger-cradle; ever guiding through the hills and valleys of Galilee, ever pointing the upward way.

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It is prayer-meeting night. Sexton Hardie has lighted his lamps and is sitting in his far-back pew, his head in his hand, quiet and waiting. One or two members of the choir have come in and taken their seats. The minister has gone up the steps and spoken to them, and slipped into his place. But we will not go in tonight—we will sit here in the park across the street in the soft spring evening, lie down on the long cool grass with stars peeping down upon us through the wide-spreading branches of the elms, and the lights of the Little Church

## THE LONG AGO

on the Corner shining through the night. And  
floating out through the open windows we will  
hear that old familiar hymn:

*“Yes we’ll gather at the river,  
The beautiful, the beautiful ri-i-ver,  
Gather with the saints at the riv-er,  
That flows by the throne of God.”*



R.F.M.

*"Here in our Great Garden that  
has no walls, are Voices that we  
know, telling stories that we  
love."*



*"Grandfather Van Alstyne was  
a gentleman of the old school."*



## Grandfather Van Alstyne

OF ALL the playmates of my child years, none lives more vividly and lovingly in memory than my delightful companion, Grandfather Van Alstyne. Companion, indeed, he was—for his characteristic and cheerful smile when I slipped softly into the office and stood beside him seated in his favorite chair, and the old affectionate way he called me “Billy,” a way I had learned to expect and love, were the outward signs of an inward bond established by a perfect understanding and a comradeship of the spirit which grew and strengthened notwithstanding the very considerable discrepancy in our ages.

Some folks understand some things; other folks understand other things; but in every boyhood there is one rare soul, and only one, who understands all things. Mothers and fathers are apt to be unnecessarily authoritative at times. Grandmothers are ever nervous and

## THE LONG AGO

solicitous respecting grandchildren. Playmates are either inferiors or grudgingly-admitted equals. Mankind at large is usually self-absorbed, or patronizing of youth to curry favor with parents, and hopelessly uninteresting and not to be too far trusted. But grandfather—he represented all that throbbing, pulsating Boyhood required in a comrade for all occasions, a *confidant* upon all subjects.

Grandfather understood women-folk and their frequently-mistaken view-points as well as I did, or a bit better. He, too, admitted their virtues and discerned their frailties, and the impossibility of entrusting them with one's innermost secrets—especially concerning the need of actually going into the water to learn to swim, and the earning-power of a lad and a fishpole in supplying the family table with strictly-fresh bass and pike and the need of an occasional nickle to meet the pressing demands of marble-time or to honorably discharge certain obligations incurred among one's fellows during the visits of the circus or at soda-fountains.

Moreover, grandfather was worldly-wise—

## GRANDFATHER VAN ALSTYNE

he knew all things since the beginning of time and well into the future, and was ever ready with an answer or an explanation that fully met each of countless questions arising from day to day. In the matter of silence—well, grandfather was a man, too, and could understand that there were certain things supposedly well hidden but eventually discovered, which need not be published broadcast in the household.

And chiefly, perhaps, grandfather was no believer in corporal punishment—as was once made clear when he rescued you from the avenging slipper of a woman bent upon putting you to bed before dark against your resounding wail of protest and your unshakeable grip upon the stair-rail. This was only one of many proofs of grandfather's dependability—one of innumerable circumstances that established and cemented a bond of affectionate understanding that not only made it possible for you to survive the ordeal of boyhood, but which has lived through the years to gladden your soul today. On his side, too, there was a knowledge that Boyhood's code-of-honor could be depended upon, and upon the occasion of many intimate

## THE LONG AGO

journeys with Grandfather Van, when it was my privilege to be his sole companion, certain manly confidences were exchanged which his trust, imposed so implicitly in me, even now forbids my detailing.

Grandfather Van Alstyne was, indeed, a gentleman of the old school, not only outwardly in the matter of personal appearance, but inwardly with respect to principles and procedure. His person was quite worthy the brush of a Sargent or of his own distinguished countryman, Van Dyke. Dressed invariably in broadcloth of the finest texture and most costly sort, his long coat collared with black velvet of the softest kind and with broad lapels rolling downward gracefully from the shoulders, he presented a notable example of the correctly-tailored gentleman of the period whose garments were made strictly with reference to endurance, propriety and elegance, with no thought other than to cheerfully and promptly pay the good tailor's bill, whatever it might be, so only the work was well done. The coat's wide opening at the front exposed an expanse of immaculate linen garment, far too handsome



## GRANDFATHER VAN ALSTYNE

to be termed a shirt as we of today know that article of apparel, and of texture so fine and delicate that its ruffles stood in sheer fluffy rows from out of which one caught an occasional gleam of plain gold studs. Around his throat was wound a linen stock, even more sheer and delicate than the wonderful garment it surmounted, and tied at the front in a wide bow carefully and lovingly constructed (if I may use that term) by Grandmother Van before grandfather was permitted to make his appearance for the day. Upon his head he wore a high silk hat, with a broad black band reaching almost two-thirds of the distance from the rim to the crown and thereby exposing only a relatively narrow band of glistening silk which had been painstakingly stroked with his red-plush-backed brush. His splendid boots, reaching almost to the knee, were topped with copper-colored leather, as would have appeared had you been able to induce him to exhibit their glories in full. Such portion as the public was privileged to view was highly polished and showed no seam, very obviously indicating that the boots had been cut from one piece of ma-

## THE LONG AGO

terial—for grandfather had often assured me that no gentleman should wear a boot made otherwise than from a single piece of leather. From beneath his low-cut waistcoat depended a watch-fob—the watch attached to it was a Liverpool railroad watch, engraved marvelously with a complete train of cars-and-engine extending entirely around the center of the timepiece, which had cost \$175 in Liverpool and obtainable at that low price only through the good offices of a friend in the watch business, from whom a discount had been secured. The last touch needed to complete this interesting picture was found in his rosewood cane with its inlaid ivory handle of black, worn shiny by long use, whose metal ferrule tapped the bricks of the sidewalk musically and rhythmically, indicating no special need for the stick as a supporting agent, but carried merely in conformity to a long-continued custom brought forward from the days when Grandfather Van was the Beau Brummel of his burgh.

This scrupulous attention to every detail of his personal appearance was not, as I eventually discovered, mere vanity. It was only

## GRANDFATHER VAN ALSTYNE

character externalized—one way of expressing himself. This was proved to me gradually, as I noted the pervading law of order and accountability throughout the premises. The back yard was as immaculately clean as a back yard could be; more than that, it *was* clean. Even the barn was swept, the meat-house floor was scrubbed, the wooden sidewalks were kept dirt-free in summer and snow-clear in winter, and the kitchen and dining-room and hallway and office, uncarpeted, were soap-and-watered regularly and often by Bridget down on her knees with a scrub-brush and a pail of soft soap. This cleanliness which was so marked a characteristic was no mere veneer, of outward and superficial origin. It came from within—was a reflection of an absolutely clean heart.

(Don't you remember how that liquid soap, home made, spread over the floor just ahead of Bridget's advancing form and suddenly evolved into suds under her powerful brush—and how she soused pails of water over the floor afterward—and then mopped it vigorously and left it, while everyone was excluded from the room until it was good and dry. Can't you smell that

## THE LONG AGO

newly-scrubbed room this minute—a pungent fragrance of indescribable quality that floated through the whole house.)

Grandfather was not without a fair allotment of human frailties—but they were not serious. Few persons knew him or understood him. He was too wise to trust all men, too discerning to confide unreservedly in the gentler sex—but he could open his heart to a child. For at 80 he, too, was a child in spirit and only the child knew that, for we were children together, 80 and 8. Grandfather was called proud, and rightly. They meant vanity when they said pride, and perhaps such was the outward seeming. But they had not crept into his heart, and the child had—so the child knew that his pride was his own natural and normal knowledge of innate cleanness and the confidence of right motives. They said he was exacting—so he was; yet he exacted no more than he gave, and gave graciously and naturally, as modestly and as purposefully as The River flowed in its appointed channel fulfilling its destiny. Severe, they said, meaning relentless—but they did not know, because they looked at him only on the

## GRANDFATHER VAN ALSTYNE

outside, that it was the severity of justice and a high standard and not the arbitrary demands of a willful individual. They tell it still, among those who today remain treading the paths that know him no more, that once a man sat in his office and began whittling the arm of his chair. Seeing it, grandfather arose, went to his side, took out his knife, and sliced a piece from the fellow's coat collar. And to the whittler's wrathful protest, grandfather quietly replied: "If you whittle my chair, I shall whittle your coat." The manner of his saying it, and his bearing as he stood, left little doubt either of his purpose or his ability to execute it. The story spread—and chair-whittling in grandfather's office became an obsolete custom.

Many there were who knew his unique personality, his quaint and forceful eccentricities, and who felt the quality of his hospitality; but few men and perhaps only one woman, and she but partly, knew his soul. For his was the soul of a child—he thought as a child, he loved as a child, and he trusted as a child when he trusted at all. Best of all he played as a child and with one—and it is in our playtime that the heart of

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us is seen, for there is no bondage then of convention or fear. And we played much together, grandfather and I, children of 80 and 8.

Vain? Was it vanity that brought him to my play-ground in the back yard, where the artesian well flowed a miniature brook from its iron pipe across the yard to the street-drain under the sidewalk, and that made him sail boats with me along its wet and muddy banks until the water spoiled those shiny boots and the dirt speckled that wonderful broad-cloth and the breeze and tree-boughs roughed the shiny silk of his hat?

Exacting? Was it exacting that he took me on his knee and patiently heard my confession of depredations upon his carefully-guarded sugar barrels, of runaway hours on swimming parties, of plans for birds'-egg excursions and unnumbered kindred misdemeanors, and that he discussed them with me man to man, encouraging all that was wholesome, reforming what was unworthy not by punishment but by banishing the desire to stray? Was it exacting that he weighed in so fine a balance the considerations of youth and accountability and delved for motives?

## GRANDFATHER VAN ALSTYNE

Severe? Was it severe that he chose reason instead of the rod with one who was seeking the right path but whose careless feet often led him far afield; or that in the solemn presence of an impressionable child he chose to live uprightly in the sight of that child rather than fill his ears with precept or sprawl him lap-wise beneath a descending slipper? Was it severity that slipped a nickle into the child's chubby hand and sent him on his way *without ever asking how he was going to spend it?*

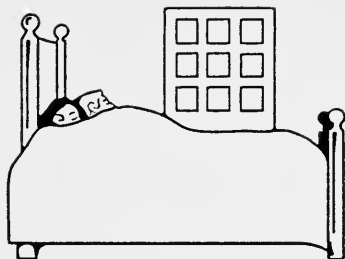
. . . . .  
Delightful companion of the Boy Time and the ever after, we have not lost each other just because our hands happen to have become disengaged here. We are still traveling on together, heart to heart, even as the sweet memory of you has remained with me through the lonely years. For there is no Age in the land where you and I met and played together—where we still live and will ever live in that heart-bond that in my Twilight brings back to me the texture of your wonderful broadcloth coat, the sheerness of your marvelous linen, the tapping of your rosewood cane upon the walk as we go

## THE LONG AGO

hand in hand toward the candy-shop, the precious comfort of your knees and encircling arms and the sweet presence and quietness and glory of your upright, unafraid and unselfed life.



## The Rain



**I**T is early, and Saturday morning—very, very early.

Listen! . . . An unmistakable drip, drip, drip . . . and the room is dark.

A bound out of bed—a quick step to the window—an anxious peering through the wet panes . . . and the confirmation is complete.

It is raining—and on *Saturday*; the familiar leaden skies and steady drip that spell permanency and send the robin to the shelter of some thick bush, and leave only an occasional undaunted swallow cleaving the air on swift wing.

In all the world there is no sadness like that which in boyhood sends you back to bed on Saturday morning with the mournful drip, drip, drip of a steady rain doling in your ears.

Out in the woodshed there is a can of the largest, fattest angle-worms ever dug from a rich garden-plot—all so happily, so feverishly,

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so exultantly captured last night when Anticipation strengthened the little muscles that wielded the heavy spade. All safe in their black soil they wait, coiled round and round each other into a solid worm-ball in the bottom of the can.

A mile down the river the dam is calling—the tumbled waters are swirling and eddying and foaming over the deep places where the black-bass wait—and old Shoemaker John, patriarch of the river, is there this very minute, unwinding his pole, for well he knows that if one cares to brave the weather he will catch the largest and finest and most bass when the rain is falling on the river.

But small boys who have anxious mothers do not go fishing on rainy days—so there is no need of haste, and one might as well go back to bed and sleep unconcernedly just as late as possible. If only a fellow could get up between showers, or before the rain actually starts, so that he could truthfully say: “But, mother, really and truly, it wasn’t raining when we started!” it would be all right, and the escape was warrantable, justified and safe; but with

## THE RAIN

the rain actually falling, there was nothing to do but go to sleep again and turn the worms back into the garden if the rain didn't let up by noon.

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It is one of the miracles of life that Boyhood can turn grief into joy and become almost instantly reconciled to the inevitable like a true philosopher, and change a sorrow into a blessing. The companion miracle is that Manhood with its years of wisdom forgets how to do this.

And so, when the rainy day becomes hopelessly rainy, and Shoemaker John is left alone at the dam, the rain that sounded so dismal at dawn proves to be a benefactor after all. There will be no wood-splitting today, no outdoor chores—for if it's too wet to go fishing, as mother insists, of course it's too wet to carry wood, or weed gardens or pick cucumbers for pickles. The logic is so obvious and conclusive that even mother does not press the point when you remind her of it—and you are free for a whole day in the attic.

Instantly the blessing is manifest—the sadness of that day-break drip, drip, drip is healed

## THE LONG AGO

—the whole character of the day is changed, and the rain-melody becomes not a dirge but a dance.

The attic is the place of all places you would most love to be on this particular calendar day!

How stupid to spoil a perfectly good Saturday by sitting on a hard beam, with wet spray blowing in your face all the time, and getting all tired out holding a heavy fish-pole, when here is the attic waiting for you with its mysterious dark corners, its scurrying mice that suddenly develop into lions for your bow-and-arrow hunting, and its maneuvers on the broad field of its floor with yourself as the drum-corps and your companions as the army equipped with wooden swords and paper helmets!

---

The day has been rich in adventure, and exploration, and the doing of great deeds.

And it has been all too short, for the attic is growing dim, and mother is again calling us—telling us to send our little playmates home and come and get our bread and milk.

A last arrow is shot into the farthest corner where some undiscovered jungle beast may be prowling.

## THE RAIN

A last roll is given to the drum, and the army disbands.

A sudden fear seizes upon us as we realize that night has come and we are in the attic, alone.

And with no need of further urging we scamper unceremoniously down the stairs, slam the attic door, and hurry into the kitchen where Maggie has our table waiting.

---

Eight o'clock—and we're all tucked away among the feathers again.

Aren't we glad we didn't go down to the river—it would have been a cold, dismal day—and perhaps they weren't biting today, anyway—and we should have gotten very wet.

It is still raining, raining hard—pattering unceasingly on the roof . . . And the tin eave-troughs are singing their gentle lullaby of running water trickling from the shingles . . . a lullaby so soothing that we do not hear mother softly open the door . . . and come to our crib . . . and place the little bare arms under the covers . . . and leave a kiss on the yellow curls and a benediction in the room.





## Aunt Em's Farm

THERE'S a buggy in that cloud of dust on the road. It's probably Farmer Griswold and Aunt Em, with the old freckled white horse, coming in from the farm. Their low, rambling, white-and-green farm-house in the midst of wide acres was just outside the town toward the fair-grounds on the other side of the railroad tracks.

Over near the big barn where the tobacco hung drying and pungent, stood the two huge butternut trees whose nuts were so rich and oily and had hard rough shells that made your thumb and forefinger tingle and smart when they cracked under your hammer-and-flatiron. The hay-barn, piled full almost to the roof, made fine diving practice—for one could climb onto the very topmost rafter and jump fearlessly into the billows of hay, to be bounced and

## THE LONG AGO

tumbled and sometimes rolled over the edge down to the floor below.

Along the pasture fence there were heavily-loaded wild-plum trees with their red and squashy sun-ripened fruit so rich and sweet—each one just a good mouthful—swallow the skins and see how far you can blow the stones!

Beyond the tobacco-field was the river, widened here to a noble stream running shallow over its stones that made bubbly, musical ripples where the black-bass came to sun themselves and feed. Here was a wonderful field for exploration—it seemed so far away from everything, and wild, and it required a brave heart and dauntless courage to walk alone down the little-used road with only the bamboo fish-pole for protection; for there stood the big red bull in the adjoining pasture, throwing great clouds of dust with his hoofs, and who could tell when he might take a notion to smash the fence and plunge to an attack. The end of the road held allurements potent enough to banish all fear—for it led straight into the stream, where shoes and stockings were hastily discarded, and legs bared to the knee splashed into the cool waters,



## AUNT EM'S FARM

unmindful of the stones that scratched and bruised and the little crabs that wriggled ticklingly from under a descending toe.

But the house was a treasure-trove almost awesome in its delights. There was a parlor, nearly always with the curtains drawn down except when "company" came—solemn and shivery and silent, its chairs carefully cloth-covered, its shining black-hair sofa, its long bean-string portieres, its what-not with the fascinating round glass paper-weight with a turtle inside which always wriggled its legs and tail, and its gorgeous bouquet of wax flowers under a glass bowl.

In Grandmother Pease's bedroom there were thrilling story-books—a whole set of them—never found elsewhere before, or then, or since, to be read by the hour until one's soul was saturated with determination to emulate their great deeds and duplicate their hairbreadth escapes.

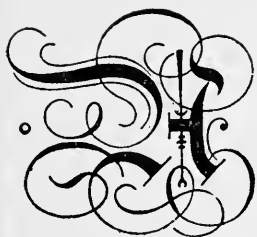
Chiefly there was the cookie-pantry with its covered stone crock always brim-full of cookies—and a cup of milk dipped right out of one of the countless big pans in the spring-house, and a handful of Aunt Em's cookies.

## THE LONG AGO

Out on the porch there was a hammock made of barrel staves and filled with cushions—a place to lie on one's back and see castles in Spain and deeds of valor form themselves so easily and generously in the fleecy white clouds that floated in the sky.

So isn't it great to see Aunt Em's buggy there in the dust-cloud and to know that she'll drive in town some Saturday and take us back to the farm with her for over Sunday . . . and let us poke the pigs, and hunt the field-mice with Major the dog, and watch the milking at evening—and actually sleep away from home one long blissful night!

## Flies and Fly-traps



AFTER ALL, come to think of it, the Old Folks never made such a fuss about flies as we make nowadays. You cannot pick up a magazine without running plumb into an article on the deadly housefly—with pictures of him magnified until he looks like the old million-toed, barrel-eyed, spike-tailed dragon of your boyhood mince-pie dreams. The first two pages convince you that the human race is doomed to extermination within eighteen months by the housefly route!

Grandmother never resorted to very drastic measures. The most violent thing she ever did was to get little Annie, Bridget-the-housewoman's Annie, to help her chase them out. They went from room to room periodically (when flies became too numerous), each armed with an old sawed-off broom-handle on which were tacked long cloth streamers—a sort of cat-o'-nine-tails effect, only with about a score or more of tails. After herding the blue-bottles and all their kith and kin into a fairly compact bunch at the door, little Annie opened the

## THE LONG AGO

screen and grandmother drove them out—and that's all there was to it.

Another favorite device (particularly in the dining-room and kitchen), was the "fly-gallery"—a wonderful array of multicolored tissue-paper festooned artistically from the ceiling or around the gas-pipes to lure or induce the fly into moments of inactivity. There was no extermination in this device—it was purely preventive in its function—the idea being that since there *must* be fly-specks, better to mass them as much as possible on places where they would show the least and could be removed the easiest when sufficiently accumulated.

But the greatest ounce-of-prevention was the screen hemisphere. Gee! I haven't thought of that thing for years, have you? Of course you remember it—absolutely fly-proof—one clapped over the butter, another over the cracker-bowl, another over the sugar.

And say! I almost forgot! . . . (Yes, I know you were just going to speak of it!) . . . That conical screen fly-trap—where the flies see something good inside, crawl up to the top and then over and in—and then can't get out

## FLIES AND FLY-TRAPS

—but just buzz and buzz and buzz—and make a lot of fuss about it—blue-bottles and all—no respecter of persons—and when it gets full of the quick and dead in flydom, Bridget takes it out in the back yard and dumps it. Very simple . . . clean, peaceful, effective.

My, My! But it's a far cry back to those days, isn't it? And *wouldn't* you like to right this mintue sneak into the cool, curtain-down, ever-so-quiet dining-room again . . . and nose around to see if anything edible had been overlooked—and see one of those dear old round fly-screens guarding the sugar!





## The Little Old Town

**L**ET'S go back to it again—back to the Little Old Town nestling among the rolling hills along the river . . . Somehow, in the Today, the massed sky-scrapers and the steady roar of traffic and the urging, ever urging, pressure of the Great City's relentless demands—and the glamour that lured us into its vortex when Ambition raced hot-blooded through our veins—have become strangely empty to our dulled senses; and the Little Old Town of that wonderful Yesterday reaches out its kindly hand to steady our steps and warm our heart with its gentle touch.

Wouldn't you like to walk down Main

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Street again, and feel the soft pine boards of the wooden sidewalks that resounded under your heels—and see the wide blue sky gleaming above the low roofs of the stores—and meet the familiar groups of neighbors chatting at the postoffice—and feel your little cares slip away into Nowhere with the fading day when the Little Old Town grows silent in the twilight and only the frogs are heard in far-off chorus on the river-bank. . . .

Barney will meet us at the depot—Barney the liveryman, and his musty old hack with its bright blue cushions. He didn't have any other name—or anyway, no one knew it, or wanted to know it, except Lawyer Bell who drew his will. Jolly, jovial, reliable old Barney—a poor man, we thought, until he at last took the Long Journey and Lawyer Bell dug up ten thousand dollars under the floor of the “office” in his livery-stable. Ten thousand dollars! There were only a few persons in the Little Old Town who could even *think* that much money! It was years before the wonder of it ceased to furnish talk among the groups at the postoffice, and even today there are some who remember it, and are still full of the wonder of it.



## THE LITTLE OLD TOWN

What a welcome he'll give us, will old Barney! He'll take our baggage and want us to ride inside the hack (a rare privilege at double fare) with his hired driver. But no siree! We want to go in the big 'bus—which only Barney himself ever drives—and we'll climb up the little iron ladder and swing ourselves onto his high seat, alongside Barney, and hold one of the lines (or perhaps both if the road isn't bad), and hear all about everything. For Barney knows all—he gets them when they first come and he takes them when they last go, and between times he hears all about them from their neighbors. The every-Saturday newspaper has little to tell that Barney doesn't already know—and what he knows that the paper doesn't tell would fill many papers.

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Here is Postmaster Moak's place—the big brown house set in the middle of a whole block, fenced with thick evergreen hedges and its brick walks bordered with them, all trimmed to the same height, squared and topped so that not so much as a twig is out of place to mar the perfect blocking.

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There's Lawyer Bell just coming down the broad stone steps of his mansion on the corner. Its high-ceilinged parlor, with rich hangings and furnishings and hand-painted family portraits of famous ancestors over the mantel, was so imposing, and awe-inspiring, and grand, and cold. His confident step is unchanged and unaffected by the oncoming years, his absorbed thought is as oblivious and his greeting is as brief as it has always been. Perhaps if we held the secrets and the destinies and even the reputations of a whole town locked in our breast we, too, might be men of fewer words.

But Banker Williams, just turning the corner, is smiling as usual through his long beard. A plain man, they called him—as often seen with the white of his flour-mill upon his coat as with the stately black of his banker's clothes unsoiled.

And there's Justice Parker, stomping straight and purposeful and determined down the street loudly tapping the sidewalk with his gold-headed cane. Speak to him if you dare, boy—if you think that Time has dimmed his memory—you who snow-balled his silk hat that

## THE LITTLE OLD TOWN

day and he saw you do it . . . Alas, that day!  
It hurts me yet, mother!

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Main Street! . . . Drive slowly, Barney—let 'em walk awhile. There's the old sprinkling-cart wetting down the dust of the street—and there's the postoffice with the same crowd sitting on the iron railing and the teams hitched to the posts at the side. . . . There's Eliza Curtis watering the red geraniums in the window boxes of her second-story rooms above Jones' dry-goods store. She owned that whole block, and had some marvellous silk dresses so stiff they'd almost stand alone . . . Seems to me Mr. Fuhrman ought to get his cigar-store Indian painted—its peeling . . . There sits old Tom Spencer, on the balcony over the post-office, with his big feet cocked on the railing. He'll throw a bucket of coal at you again down the long flight of steps if you yell at him like you did one day.

There's a lot of people on the red iron bridge, probably watching the black-bass and pike rising to feast on the first clouds of May-flies as they skim the surface of the river.

## THE LONG AGO

Charlie Hopkins' candy store still stands solitary and strange on the bridge, built on tall, gaunt skeleton-like piles in the middle of the river. Some folks said he built it there so he wouldn't have to buy any land or pay any taxes, because no one owned the middle of the river, but maybe folks were just gossiping, and anyway, Charlie Hopkins was the only one who'd sell a penny's worth of *mixed* caramels, and he gave the biggest if not the purest licorice stick for a cent. There weren't any smart-Aleck clerks in his store. And Charlie never told on his good customers who bought glass-tipped cigarettes occasionally. He and his wife kept the place themselves, and lived in the rear. If Mr. Hopkins, thin and sharp-eyed and quick of step, did not happen to be on duty, Mrs. Hopkins, very, very large, and correspondingly deliberate of movement, was always filling, completely filling, her accustomed rocking chair, ready to gather in every stray penny that floated into the house. The odors of cooking and general domesticity mingled with the smell of years-old candy and the peculiar fragrance of the soda-fountain, to make an atmosphere

## THE LITTLE OLD TOWN

totally unlike that of any other store in town and that will never be forgotten.

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Barney, Barney! Hold your horses, please do, Barney! Here comes the band, right down the middle of the street, dirt and mud and all, playing the same old march: "Um-dum-de um dum dum—um-diddy—um—dum—dum!" We know almost everybody in it, don't we—only they all look so different in their uniforms, glorified entirely away from barber-chairs and calico-counters and prescription-cases and shoemaker's benches. You feel that you just can't ever let Charlie demean himself again by cutting your hair, after you see him in the glory of his band regalia and hear him sending forth the clarion blasts of his B-flat cornet. It mattered nothing that the cornets were outscreeching the trombone, that the "woof, woof, woof, woof," of the bass horn drowned the cornet, that the screech of the piccolo wasn't in quite the same key as the flutes or that the bass-drum and cymbals crashed the whole band into oblivion and fairly made the nearby buildings tremble and sent every horse-owner on the street to the head of his wild-eyed, snorting,

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struggling steed. It was the band—our home band—playing the very tune that won for them first prize at the County Fair—our friends and neighbors marching erect and splendid in its ranks—and he would be an ingrate indeed who takes thought of such non-essentials as keys and modulations and close harmonies and technique, and who is not thrilled and pride-filled when those gorgeous lines come sweeping down the street and the air is filled with the noble strains of that matchless “Um-dum-de um dum dum—um diddy um dum dum! . . .

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It hasn't changed at all, the Little Old Town. It's all here, just the same as ever.

There was time to live, then—time to live and love and labor—time to make friends and be a friend—time to catch the lilt of the meadow-lark and the fragrance of the lilac and the gleam of the hollyhocks against the brick wall, and to know the warmth of a neighbor's greeting.

It's the self-same Little Old Town today that it was in the long ago.

We need only come back to it!



## School Days



COME, little boy, wake up! School begins today.

Strange, isn't it, that the eyes which were so wide open before daylight on circus day, and the little legs which were scrambling around in the garden in the gray dawn after worms for that trip to the trout stream, are this morning so tightly closed and so wonderfully still at almost 8 o'clock. . . . But—school again!

It's hard luck, isn't it, little fellow?

Same old stuffy room; teacher watching all the time; no chance to shy paper wads; no talking to the other fellows, even in a whisper, without penalty; the same old stupid grammars, the same perplexing arithmetics, the same uninteresting geographies.

Caged through the best hours of the day! Yes, caged as rebelliously and as hopelessly as is the wild creature behind its steel bars.

Of what avail the sunlight, the soft air, the stream-song and the noisy chatter of the squirrels that come floating in through the open

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windows? They are all far out of reach, and only tantalize.

To be sure, dearie, there will come the 4 o'clock hour, in the same old way. There will be the same old feeling of freedom, of bounding joy, of carelessness when "school is out." The unrestrainable shout will echo across the valley as of old, but all these last will be tempered by the thought that tomorrow—the choicest part of each tomorrow—must be spent within the cage again.

But never mind, little lover!

Some day you will pass through these school-day trials and joys again—in memory.

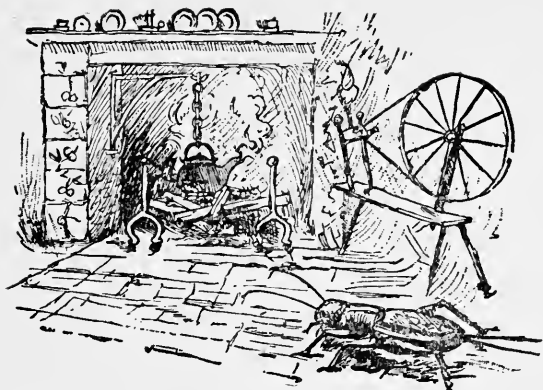
You will look back upon them through tear-prisms that will make them glow crimson-bright and glorious.

And the world-tired heart of you will cry out in ineffable longing to go back to the boyhood days, throw open the door of their school-time cage and enter into it again as one enters into the realm of an immeasurable happiness.

So wake up, dearie! Come, now, don't make mother call you again!

School begins today—and there are so few school days in life!





## Autumnal Activities

**T**HERE were three recognized uses for leaves in the Autumn—first, to be banked by the wind along fences or sidewalk edges and provide kicking-ground for exuberant youngsters returning home from school; second, to be packed around the foundations of the house as a measure for interior comfort in winter; and, third, to be pressed between the pages of the big Bible and kept for ornamental purposes until they crumbled and had to be thrown away. This last-named use was always questioned by every red-blooded boy, and more tolerated than accepted—a concession to the women of earth, from little sister with her bright-hued wreath

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to mother and grandmother with their book of pressed leaves.

Even for purposes of comfort their use was more or less secondary—granted because the banking-up process was a man's job and an out-door enterprise. Then, too, it was a lot of fun to rake the big yard and get the fallen leaves into one or two huge piles; and wheelbarrow them to the edge of the house where old Spencer had driven the wooden pegs that held the boards ready to receive the leaves. Load after load was dumped into the trough-like arrangement and stamped down tight and hard by old Tom's huge feet and little Willie's eager but ineffective ones—and then the top board was fastened down, and never a cold winter wind could find its way under the floors with such a protective bulwark around the house. . . . And in the spring the boards had to be taken down—and countless bleached bugs fairly cozed out into the spring sunlight—and the snow-wet soggy leaves were raked out and burned, and the smoke was so thick and heavy that it hardly got out of the yard.

But the *real* use of leaves—their only legiti-

## AUTUMNAL ACTIVITIES

mate function in the Autumn, according to all accepted boy-law—was for kicking purposes.

Plunging through banks of dry leaves along the edge of the sidewalk—knee-deep sometimes—scattering them in all directions, even about our heads—there was such a racket that we could scarcely hear each other's shouts of glee. And we'd run through them only to dive exhausted into some huge pile of them, rolling and kicking and hollering until some kid came along and chucked an armful, dirt and all, plumb into our face! This was the signal for a battle of leaves—and perhaps there would have been fewer tardy-marks, teacher, if there had been fewer autumn leaves along the route . . . Perhaps!

There were influences that tempered the joys of leaf-kicking—some "meanie" was always ready to hide a big rock, or other disagreeable foreign substance, under a particularly inviting bunch of leaves—then watch and giggle at your discomfiture when you came innocently ploughing along!

What a riot of wonderful color they made just after the first frosts had turned their green

## THE LONG AGO

to red and gold and brown! As a boy I disdained so weak a thing as noticing the coloring on Big Hill—but now, in the long-after years, I realize that its vivid Autumn garment was indestructibly fixed in my memory and has lived—saved for me until I could look back through Time's long glass and understand and love that glorious picture. Not even the brush of a Barbizon master could tell the story of Big Hill, three miles up the river from Main Street bridge, gleaming in the hues that Jack Frost mixed, beneath the blue-gold dome of a cloudless sky—for it could not paint the chatter of the squirrel, or the glint of the bursting bitter-sweet berry, or the call of the crow, or the crisp of the air, or the joy of life that only boyhood knows!

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Many wonderful things happened at grandpa's in the autumn.

One day when you were hanging around the kitchen after school for no special reason and several very good ones, grandpa came to the door and told Bridget, the house-woman, to open the little west window in the potato-cellar and hook it back.

## AUTUMNAL ACTIVITIES

Your plans for another sortie into the cookie-pantry were temporarily abandoned as you clattered out into the crisp afternoon air to see what was going on.

A little old broad-faced sun-bronzed farmer had backed-up a big green box-wagon against the board sidewalk just opposite the west window in the potato-cellar.

The wagon was full of potatoes—fine, sound Early Rose, you recollect—and the wagon-box was so full that some of them rolled into the street when old Pete backed his wagon ki-plunk against the sidewalk and hollered “whoa, there!” to his horses.

Then a chute was fixed on the back of the wagon, its other end poking through that used-once-a-year little west window in the potato-cellar. The back-board of the wagon was knocked and pried and lifted up—and away rolled the potatoes along the chute and into the cellar.

The whole house re-echoed with the bump—br-r-r-r-ump—the hollow, resonant, deep rumble of rolling potatoes as old Pete shoveled bushel after bushel into the chute while grandpa

## THE LONG AGO

stood on the sidewalk and kept an eye on the proceedings. And when the last half-dozen potatoes had been scraped noisily into the cellar depths he counted out some gold-pieces and some silver into old Pete's knotty hand—and another important autumn event had become history.

Then grandpa came marching into the kitchen with three or four potatoes in his hand:

"There, Mrs. Van, the cellar's full and they're running pretty much all like these."

"Well, they seem all right, Mr. Van, and if they're as good as the lot we had last year that's all I ask."

And there they were—bushels of them—bought by contract and barter and bargaining—a winter's supply laid-in all at one time—and you surely remember how they used to begin to sprout after a while and send up little white shoots until Bridget and little Annie went down cellar one day and "sprouted" the whole lot.

Dear old Early Rose! Do they grow now, I wonder? Seems to me we just order 25-cents worth of "potatoes"—any kind—just "spuds," as the grocer writes it on his bill.

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Of course, they're all right—as “spuds” go—but you can't get any *real* baked potatoes nowadays . . . You can? . . . Oh, but you never had one of grandma's baked Early Rose—the ground doesn't grow 'em—and the ovens don't bake 'em—unh!—unh!

There was something very substantial in the sound of those potatoes rolling along the chute into the cellar. . . . It was the sound of plenty—made a fellow feel sort of safe. . . . Perhaps it's just as good to let the grocer keep them in *his* cellar, and get them in sacks-full as we need them . . . But doesn't it look funny to see a big husky delivery-man come stomping in with a little paper *sack* of “spuds”—especially to a fellow who has ever watched old Pete and his scoop-shovel and who has heard that deep, hollow, resonant rumble of the wagon-load of Early Rose rolling into the dark, cold cellar!

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Did your folks have a meat-house—stored full of pork and beef every autumn? . . . Of course they did! Only it seems so far away, looking backward from this day of 50-cent

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bacon which was a sort of by-product in grandfather's time, that I thought maybe I dreamed it or read it somewhere.

Our meat-house was the best-built and neatest affair on the place except the main house. It was between the big barn and the end of the kitchen wing. Great iron hooks hung from huge rafters overhead with smaller bracket hooks on all walls. A chopping block stood in one corner—same as you see now in the meat markets, only its legs were more wobbly and less fancy.

I don't remember just how many hogs and young pigs and beeves grandfather bought every year—but I know the meat-house was as large as a small cottage, and it was chuck full of hams and hind-quarters and sides and spare-ribs and every other edible part—suspended from the big hooks or laid on the long tables.

When the "smoking" began, hams, shoulders, bacon and sausage were all hung up in the smoke-house on the far side of the barn—and the crisp autumn air was redolent of combined wood-and-pig smoke wafting leisurely out of the little top windows of the smoke-house



## AUTUMNAL ACTIVITIES

. . . (Well, just because you never had any smoked sausage, you needn't think it wasn't smoked. We always had it—long skins of it—and you could grab a hunk of it in one grimy hand and a soda cracker in the other and sneak out of the back gate and just evaporate into Nowhere without ever remembering that the kitchen wood-box was nearly empty.) Of course, grandfather had other sausage—and it was *sausage!* Real *pork* sausage—little pig sausage like Uncle Milo still makes on his Wisconsin farm—with plenty of good fragrant sage in it (can't you just smell it this minute!)—and not the all-sorts, a-little-of-everything-that-we-can't-use-elsewhere kind that they offer us nowadays.

All through the winter when grandmother called for a roast, or a steak, or chops, or anything else, grandfather would wind his muffler around his neck (it was colder'n blazes in the meat-house!) and go out and cut just the exact piece she wanted . . . If you happened to see him start before grandmother caught sight of you, you'd find it convenient to be elsewhere without delay, because if she saw you she'd say,

## THE LONG AGO

“Willie, go help your grandfather bring in the meat,” and then you’d have to stand around in the cold till your knuckles and nose got blue. Gee whiz! but that meat-house was *cold!* The mere memory of it now makes me feel as if I haven’t been warm through-and-through since I last stood numb and shivering in that little old meat-house.

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After the cutting and trimming were done, and the meat was stored away, grandmother and Bridget tackled the soap. The scraps of fat left over from the meat cutting were added to a collection previously made and the whole was dumped into a huge iron soap kettle. Then more water was poured on the ash barrel, and the lye started moving again. There was always a barrel of wood-ashes—maple was best but oak was good—the cleaner the ashes the better the lye—with water poured on it that eventually trickled through the ashes and came out of the bottom. This lye and fat were mixed in the big kettle and boiled until it was thick, when it was put into its own special barrel ready for use. This was the famous “soft soap” of

## AUTUMNAL ACTIVITIES

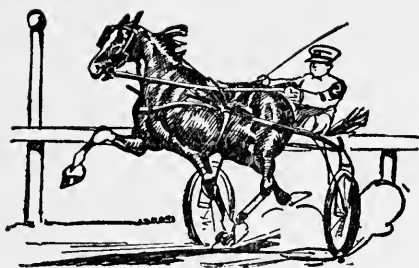
the long ago—and no one who knew its ingredients ever doubted that the kitchen table-tops and the floor were sure-enough clean after Bridget finished scrubbing them. The hard soap had to have salt in it to stiffen it—spread on boards and dried and cut into square chunks . . . and *smell*? Glory be! Wasn't it something *awful*! But grandmother and Bridget never seemed to mind it!

Folks nowadays say: "What's the use of making soap when you can buy it so cheap?" . . . Well, perhaps they're right. But somehow—tonight—here by the open fire—with the first chill of the autumn outside—I can't help wishing I could see the old meat-house tomorrow with its suspended hams and shoulders and sides and spare-ribs and sausage links, and the fumes coming out of the smoke-house—yes, and even smell the soap brewing out in the back yard.

And best of all, I wish I had a chunk of smoked sausage in one hand and a soda cracker in the other, and was sneaking out of the back gate down to the river forgetting the empty wood-box in the kitchen. . . . So many un-

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filled wood-boxes through the years and such long time empty—ever calling, calling me back just as my hand touches the latch of the dream-gate that swings outward.



## The County Fair

WHEN Farmer Griswold planted his corn he selected certain kernels with special care, buried them just as carefully in that part of his field that seemed to have the richest and best soil, hoed that row with particular zeal and thoroughness, and brought its stalks to a splendid maturity that distinguished them from all their fellows in the broad sun-warmed acres. So, also, with his potatoes, and his beets and his tobacco. He watched his growing wheat and oats and barley with trained and discerning eye, marking spots where the grain grew thickest and tallest and the heads were the longest and plumpest. Each pumpkin's growth was noted, and the squash were under careful and constant inspection. Likewise he sorted out certain favored hogs and penned them away from the others, bestowing upon them inordinate partiality in the matter of good feed and

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plenty of it. Nor could the rank and file of the dairy herd and the horses in the big barn understand why some of its members received such special and unremitting care from the Hired Man.

When Aunt Em made pickles and put up peaches and green gages, certain jars that were filled the neatest with baby cucumbers all of a size and perfectly matched were set up on a special shelf in the pantry under a special label.

Grandmother Pease—she really wasn't anybody's grandmother, but she ought to have been because Nature made her just what a grandmother should be, so everyone called her grandmother—wove the most beautiful rag rugs and pieced the most gorgeous silk bedspreads and knitted the warmest and most intricate shoulder-throws and coverlets which she gave away generously among her friends. But always there was one piece upon which she was working with special devotion—it progressed slowly because she worked on it only when she felt strongest or had time to give it undivided attention. It took her almost a year to finish this particular article—but what a masterpiece it

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was when she finally removed it from its protective sheet in which she had kept it rolled and secreted and displayed it for the approval of the family.

Mr. Wegeman, cigar-maker, rolling his hand-made cigars in their hollowed-out compartments in the hardwood board before him, day by day set aside certain ones that came out of the mould most perfectly shaped and of finest and most uniform color. Later he formed them tenderly into fans and ovals and stars and crescents and circles and houses and various other artistic shapes, beneath a great glass case with his name inside in red and blue and gold letters. Then he closed its glass cover, locked it, and put it out of sight for a time.

Woodard & Stone, the big candy and cracker manufacturers, had a glass case, too. It had their name written in flaming letters of real red cinnamon drops, and checker-boards of real caramels, and a cracker menagerie of every wild animal known to man—all guarded by real chocolate nigger-babies and real candy men. They, too, built it up throughout the year of the choicest product of their fairyland fac-

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tory, closed its glass lid, locked it, and set it away for a while.

And so in the broad fields and gardens of the country and the busy shops of the Little Old Town, things laboriously brought-forth from the soil and things hand-fashioned lovingly, were sorted-out and selected, cast aside and brought-back, re-sorted and re-selected, weighed and balanced and compared, chosen and rejected—all in a year-long preparation for that one supreme annual event which more than all others welded the dear people of the valley into one great happy family.

What heartsomeness and love and consecrated labor went to make up the County Fair! Perhaps you thought it was only a vast collection of corn and wheat and potatoes and knitted coverlets and pickles and cigars and candy and a hundred other things, assembled annually in one spot so that three-shell men and flag-sellers and bus-drivers and all-sorts could congregate to filch money from careless simple folk, or give an extra day's vacation from school. That is not at all what the County Fair stood for, not what it reflected. Those fat hogs and sleek



## THE COUNTY FAIR

cattle and beautiful horses with their blue-ribbon prizes, those towering grain-shocks and mammoth pumpkins, those lace doilies and pyramids of preserves, the squeaky grand-stand at the race-track where sleek trotters and long-limbed running horses brought the cheering crowds to their feet amid fluttering handkerchiefs and the blare of the brass band—all these were only phenomena. The County Fair was an institution—a living, throbbing, pulsating human expression—not born and dying in two brief weeks, but loved and worked-for every day of every year, living daily in the hearts of those who filled its stalls and counters with the fatness of the land, just as it lives on in the loving memory of everyone who once strolled among its glories and caught the real meaning of the County Fair behind its piled-up displays.

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The fair-grounds were far from town, and the road was long and dusty. The 25-cent piece given you for the occasion together with the odd pennies heroically saved for it, seemed so inadequate! But just as you were about to go out of the door, and had resigned yourself to

## THE LONG AGO

make the best of it with such meager allowance, grandfather called you back into the office:

“Going to the fair, Billy?”

“Uh-huh.”

“How much money have you got?”

A freckled hand delved into various pockets, assembled an assortment of coins, and held them palm-up for grandfather to count.

“That’s only 33 cents, Billy. Can you get along with that?”

“Uh-huh—I guess so, gran’pa.”

A hand on your curly head (its kindly touch lingers through all the long years!) and the other hand fumbling in the vest pocket on the right side—a breathless moment of utter vacuum so fearful was its expectancy—and then a big half-dollar dropped silently into the 33-cent pile. A whole half-dollar! It was beyond immediate comprehension. But another look and a tightening of the little fist around its huge rim was confirmation indisputable—two boy-arms thrown about broadcloth shoulders, a tight hug and a kiss on a soft wrinkled cheek—and a dash for the door that clicked shut simultaneously with a shout: “Hey, fellers, look what I got!”

## THE COUNTY FAIR

Down the street there came a long open 'bus—carpet-covered seats along each side and a canvas top gorgeously fringed. It was Barney's summer 'bus—and Barney's own voice sounded its clarion invitation to the town: "All aboard for the fair grounds! First load going right out!"

Almost before its echoes had died away, the "first load" was crowded into the 'bus, every inch of space made available by Barney's firm: "Move up a little in front please and let this lady in. . . . Right this way, Mr. Selick, plenty of room. . . . Move up a little more, please . . . That's it, thank you . . . All filled now, I guess . . . Here we go . . . Whoa, wait a minute. Gotta take Mis' Clark in—always wait for the school-marm, and always room for one more."

The fares were collected, and Barney prepared to swing himself into place on the driver's seat. But a new problem awaited him. Three boys were there, and they began bargaining immediately for half-fare rides.

"Got no room, boys, all full."

"Aw, Barney, c'm-mon, let us ride on the steps fer ten cents."

## THE LONG AGO

"And fall off and get hurt and me having to tell your grandfather, eh?"

"Ugh-ugh, Barney, we won't fall, honest we won't. Aw Barney, we just gotta go on th' first load."

"Climb on then, and be quick about it. . . . That's all right, keep your money."

And so the first load, packed full with the springs touching, and with three bobbing, ecstatic youngsters struggling for foothold on the steps and clinging firmly to the iron railing and each other, goes rumbling through town, the envy of everyone who missed a place in it and had to wait for the next load. Countless times along that dusty road Barney shook his head at imploring individuals and groups along the roadside and sung out: "Nope, can't take another one. Full up. Springs hitting now. Better sit down under that tree and wait. Be another 'bus along in a minute." A crack of his long whip over the heads of his four horses, (*four* horses!) and away we go over the ruts and through the dust-clouds, while the 'bus sings merrily with the voices of friends and neighbors dusty and hot and happy. . . .

## THE COUNTY FAIR

We stand together in the early twilight, dear Child of my Life-long Dream, upon the broad promenade of the wonderful Court of the Kings. The full moon gleams yellow-white in the deep purple sky, mirrored in the placid waters of the wide lagoon. Stately columns of great white palaces are silhouetted against the starry heavens; the dome of the Administration Building flares high into the night with its thousand electric globes, while other thousands glow like fireflies throughout the acres of beautiful buildings housing exhibits of all the world. Vast gardens exhale their incomparable perfume upon the air, and through the heavy fragrance the notes of a mocking-bird ring-out in a glorious burst of melody as if all the birds of the fields were here foregathered to offer each his song in loving competition.

It is all very wonderful, to stand here in the midst of its indescribable glory, feeling the gentle pressure of your shoulder, your hand seeking mine in the silence—here in this favored place to which the wide world has sent its choicest fashionings, the most perfect of its handiwork.

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But the pressure of your child-fingers somehow blurs the splendor of this place—the flaming electric dome becomes only a smoky torch swaying unsteadily beside a popcorn-and-lem-onade stand—the stately palaces change to loose canvas tents and low wooden sheds—the rich harmonies of the orchestra merge into the crude grind of a merry-go-'round's shrill organ—and all the myriad wonders of Today's beautiful World's Fair hark back to their simple brother of the long ago whose prize was not the commerce of a world, but just the blue ribbon of loving rivalry among simple folk rejoicing in the co-operation of hand and heart.

So tonight we go backwards and upwards, dear child of mine, to the County Fair—backwards to its smoky torches and canvas tents and grinding organs—but upwards and onward to the spirit of simple loving-kindness and human helpfulness that lifted it above dingy tents and glorified it into a throbbing, pulsating, enduring Expression of Life.



## Getting in the Wood

**A**N autumnal event of importance, second only to the filling of the meat-house, was the purchase and sawing of the wood.

Three sizes, remember—the 4-foot lengths for the long, low stove in the big room, 12-inch “chunks” for the oval sheet-iron stove in the parlor, and the fine-split 18-inch lengths for the kitchen. (Yes, they burned wood in the kitchen—not only wood, but oak and maple and hickory—the kind you buy by the carat nowadays!)

And what a fire it made! Two sticks of the long wood in the stove in the big room, and the damper open, and you’d have to raise the windows inside of fifteen minutes no matter how low the thermometer registered outside. In the kitchen grandmother did all her cooking with a wood fire—using the ashes for the lye barrel—and the feasts that came steaming from her famous oven have never been equalled on any gas-range ever made. (Gas-range! how grandmother would have sniffed in scorn at

## THE LONG AGO

such a suggestion!) Even coal was only fit for the base burner in the family sitting-room—and that must be anthracite, or “hard” coal, the kind that comes in sacks nowadays at about the same price as butter and eggs. And even the wood had to be split just so and be “clear” and right, or grandmother would scold grandfather for not wearing his near-seeing specs when he bought it. “Guess they fooled you on that load, Mr. Van,” she’d say. “It isn’t like the last we had.”

Don’t you remember how you were hanging around the kitchen one Saturday morning kind-a waiting for something to come within reach, and grandfather’s cane came tap-tapping down the long hall, and he pushed open the kitchen door and stood there, just inside the door, until the kettle started boiling over and making such a noise. And then he announced that he thought he better go out and see if there was any wood in market. (As if there weren’t fifty farmers lined up there almost before daylight!) It was about nine o’clock and the sun had had a chance to warm things up a bit—so grandmother wrapped him up in his knitted muffler and away



## GETTING IN THE WOOD

he went beneath his shiny silk hat. And because you stood around and looked wistfully up at him, he finally turned back, just before he reached the big front door and said: "Want to go along, Billie?" Of course you went, because there were all kinds of shops on the way up town to the wood market and grandfather always had an extra nickle for such occasions.

Can't you just see that wood-market now, as it used to be in the Long Ago—with its big platform scales—and its wagons of accurately-piled cord-wood marked on the end of some stick with the white chalk-mark of the official "inspector" and measurer—and the farmers all bundled-up and tied-around with various cold-dispelling devices and big mitts and fur caps? So far as *you* could tell then (or now, either, I'll wager!) every load was exactly like every other load—but not so to grandfather, for he would scrutinize them all, sound them with his stick, barter and dicker and look out for knots—and then make the rounds again and do it all over before finally making his selection—and I distinctly remember feeling that the wood left in market after grandfather had made his selection wasn't worth hauling away!

## THE LONG AGO

Load after load was driven up to the high back-yard fence and its sticks heaved into the yard and piled in perfect order—and it made a goodly and formidable showing when Old Pete, the wood-sawyer, finally arrived on the scene. The time of wood-buying was determined partly by Pete's engagements—he went first to the Perkinses and next to the Williamses and so on in rotation as he had done for years, his entire winter being “engaged” far ahead. It did not seem possible, to boyish mind, that one man could *ever* get all that wood sawed and split, even if he was a great giant Norseman with the finest buck-saw in the country.

But each year Old Pete's prowess seemed to increase—and day after day the ceaseless music of his saw sounded across the crisp air—and the measured strokes of his axe struck a clarion note—until finally the yard showed only chips and saw-dust where that vast wood-pile had been—and the big barn was piled full to the rafters—the kitchen wood and chunks on one side, the big wood on the other.

Then Pete would come in and announce that the job was done—and grandfather would

## GETTING IN THE WOOD

bundle-up and go out for a final inspection. Pete removed the pad from his leg (you remember the carpet he wore on his left knee—the one that held the stick in place in the buck when he was sawing) and together they went into the barn—and talked it all over—and Pete said it was harder wood than last year's and more knots in it and ought to be worth two shillings more than contract price—and grandfather finally allowed the excess—and Old Pete came in and got his money (in gold and silver) and a bowl of coffee and some bread—and went his way to the Joneses or some other folks.

And you, young man—you surely hated to see that great Viking go—for he had told you many a wonderful tale at the noon hour as he munched his thick sandwiches—and no one could look at his massive head and huge shoulders and great beard and hair and doubt that his forebears had done all that he credited to them.

Somehow, Old Pete seemed more real than most men you knew—except grandfather, of course. There was something unexplainable in the man and his work that rang true—some-

## THE LONG AGO

thing that was so wholesome and sound. He wasn't like old Hawkins, the grocer—*he'd* as lief give you a rotten apple as not if he could smuggle it into the bag without you seeing him; and Kline the candy-man sometimes sold you old hard stuff mixed with the fresh. But Old Pete here—he just worked honest and steady—out in the open—at a fixed wage—and he did an honest job and was proud of it even if it was only sawing wood. He worked faithfully until it was done, and then he got a good word and a bowl of coffee and his wages in gold and silver—and went his way rejoicing, leaving behind him the glory of labor well performed blending with the refreshing fragrance of new-cut logs that sifted through the cracks of the old barn.



## The Sugar Barrels

**D**O you remember the three barrels of sugar in the dark place under the stairs—or were they in the big pantry just off the kitchen?

Well, anyway, there were three, you recollect—two of white and one of brown.

Always the brown sugar—and each Autumn the same colloquy:

“Mr. Van, don’t you think we can get along without the brown sugar this year?”

“Now, Mrs. Van, you’ve *got* to have a *little* brown sugar in the house—and it comes cheaper by the barrel.”

“Yes, so it does, Mr. Van . . . We can use it, I suppose, in something . . . And we always have had it, and . . . Well, do as you think best.”

White sugar was good when you had something to go with it.

But brown sugar stood alone—sticky, heavy, crumbly lumps that held together until a fellow

## THE LONG AGO

could tip back his head and drop one of the chunks in his mouth.

And after school grandmother could be persuaded to cut a full-size slice of bread (thick) and spread it with butter (thick) and you'd start away with it (quick)—just nibbling at one edge, not really biting—and you'd sneak into the dark place under the stairs (or into the pantry)—and reach deep down into the white sugar barrel—and grab a handful—and sprinkle it over the bread-and-butter—and shake back into the barrel all that didn't stick to the butter—and then do it all over again—and pat it down hard—and then sprinkle just a little bit more on hurriedly, (because grandfather's cane could be heard tapping down the hall)—and then you emerged with dignity, but with no unnecessary commotion—and just faded away into the Outer World so softly, so gently, so contentedly! . . .

(Have you tried any bread-and-butter-and-sugar recently? Did it taste the same as it used to? . . .

No? . . . Perhaps you broke it into pieces

## THE SUGAR BARRELS

instead of beginning at one side and eating straight through?

Or maybe you got hold of the cooking butter . . . Or did you try it with baker's bread? . . .

No? . . . Well, *why* didn't it taste the same?)



*"Only a strong man can go back  
over the old road to the beginning  
point."*





## The Old Bell

GRANDFATHER VAN ALSTYNE kept a tavern. It was called the Exchange Hotel, located on one of the four main business corners of the town, directly across from the post-office and the bank. And it was more than a hotel—the Commercial House filled that place—it was a home known far and wide for the indescribable but never-to-be-forgotten excellence of its cuisine, the generosity of its portions, the warmth and genuineness of its hospitality and the unique personality of its host.

Grandmother furnished the cuisine, the generosity of its portions, and the unchanging hospitality—in a word, she made the home. It will be noted that grandmother was a considerable factor in the Exchange Hotel—a factor which began working about 4:30 or 5 o'clock

## THE LONG AGO

every morning—in summer when the first faint streaks of daylight showed in the east, and in winter when her own home-made sperm candles lighted her labors—and continued without rest until 9:30 or 10 o'clock at night. She was seldom seen in the front part of the house—an occasional visit to the "office" if she knew Mr. Van was there alone, once in a while a few moments in the "parlor," when Will Hoard or Frank Spearman or some other favorite guest had arrived. Her long hours were spent in her own domain—the kitchen and dining-room, and at night in the back sitting-room by the big base-burner or at the round red-cloth-covered table which held the large black Bible.

Grandfather Van supplied the unique personality—a compelling influence in the institution, indeed. It is related, upon undoubted authority (this tale with others of like quality is almost a legend in the Little Old Town, and thereabouts) that a traveling man, a stranger, once applied for lodging and demanded to be shown the bed he was to occupy. Grandfather, as his custom was, escorted him upstairs and opened-up the bedroom. The stranger immed-

## THE OLD BELL

ately attacked the bed, pulled down its sheets and comforts, examined it minutely and finally smelled of its sheets from headboard to foot. Grandfather watched the performance in silence. When the stranger announced that apparently the bed was clean and he'd take the room, grandfather requested him to take off his clothes, right then and there. And when the thoroughly surprised stranger demanded the reason for the unusual request, grandfather said he wished to see whether the man was clean enough to be worthy of the bed! It is further related that the stranger slept elsewhere that night!

In the hallway that led to the dining-room there stood a hat-rack—a long wooden affair with two shelves, you remember the kind. At one end, on the lower shelf, there was a large brass dinner-bell, with a wooden handle. It was always in that one place—as certain to be just exactly there as the sun was to rise. The penalty for its displacement was too well understood to be incurred.

Every day of every year for a half-century or more, exactly at 12 o'clock noon, grand-

## THE LONG AGO

mother appeared at the door of the office and told Mr. Van dinner was ready, and went quickly back to her post. Every day of every year, for a half-century, at that hour, Grandfather Van took the old bell to the front door of the Exchange Hotel and swung it in a semi-circle, from shoulder to knee and shoulder, while its heavy clapper struck a clarion note that echoed and re-echoed up and down the streets of the village.

When the sound of that old brass bell reached the community, its message could not fail to be understood. If ever a bell talked, that bell did. And if ever a people could interpret the voice of a voiceless mould of brass, that people could. As plain as the printed words on this page, it said: "Dinner is ready, dinner is ready—at the hotel, Exchange Hotel—dinner is ready, a good dinner, too—the best for the price, in the state, in the state—dinner is ready, dinner is ready—dinner is read— . . . dinner is . . . dinner . . . din . . . di . . . d . . . !"

And when the old bell was put back in its place on the hat-rack, it invariably gave a last

## THE OLD BELL

muffled wood-deadened clangle, of satisfaction as it settled to rest that clearly spoke its knowledge of a job well and thoroughly done. If benighted mortals failed to respond, it was their loss—of a good meal; but its duty had been performed.

The note of that old bell was much more than the sound of iron clapper upon tinkling brass. It was a Voice—the voice of an institution that was as much a part of the life of the village as was the town clock or the fire engine bell or the town band or the tolling of the church bell. Its message was a message of Life—of two lives moving on and on together through the struggling years, of two loves blending graciously from the morning of youth through the high noon of maturity and into the night of age—a message of daily duty and unremitting toil, of ministry and of devotion—of the upbuilding of an institution making for itself a worth-while place in the world. The tones of that bell were never uncertain, its message was never indefinite. Always, until the hands of its master-ringer were stilled upon his white coverlet, it spoke with authority, as

## THE LONG AGO

one who knows that he knows and bids the whole world test the quality of his work.

And those who accepted its clarion invitation through that half-century came half-joyfully, half-reverently, and all respectfully. They came sordidly expectant of the savory things that grandmother's hands and helpers prepared—but they came more to receive the benediction of her sweet presence, the comfort of that home's matchless hospitality, and the refreshment of a half-hour's meeting with friends who chaffed and gossiped, or with the stranger who brought tidings and tales from the big world outside.

No single item upon Memory's tablet affects me quite the same way as the old bell—no sound has carried through the years quite so clearly as its sound. In the boyhood time I thought it was my insatiable appetite that made me love its ringing—but in the after-years I find that I, too, caught its message whose interpretation was withheld from me then, but opened to me now.

Occasionally — very occasionally — grandfather permitted me to ring the bell—and right

## THE OLD BELL

this minute I can feel the same awe I knew then as I marched to the front door lugging it in both hands—I can hear my same childish gurgle of joy as of possession of something long cherished but ever renounced. I can feel grandfather's presence beside me on the door-step—even the faint fragrance of his long broadcloth coat seems here—as I struggled bravely but inadequately with the ponderous thing of brass and iron. And I can see him now, when my boy hands failed to send forth its wonted message, stoop and take the bell and start his famous semi-circle that made the shoemaker drop his awl, the postmaster lay down his glasses, and the traveling-man lock-up his sample room to seek a tin basin and the roller towel and an early seat at grandmother's long table.

. . . . .

Downstairs in the dining-room there is a wonderful dinner bell that came from a palace in the Land of the Cherry Blossom. It has several gongs of varying sizes, each marvelously wrought to give-forth its soft but far-reaching cadence, and all of their tones so beautifully blended that when the deft fingers of our Jap-

## THE LONG AGO

anese maid touch each gong with the chamois ball, there floats through the house a harmony of sound like the far-off serenade of a fairy band. No more perfectly modulated and attuned invitation to a feast could possibly be devised.

But tonight, as I rose from the work-table in my room to answer its summons, that had gradually floated away into the night, I went to a corner in a nearby bookshelf—a corner almost like that in the old hat-rack in grandfather's hall—and reverently lifted the old dinner bell—yes, the self-same bell that my boy hands struggled with, strangely come back to me after all these years and cherished beyond any other single earthly possession of mine . . . gently I swung it to left and right—and as its clapper touched the brass with the old-time spirit and comradeship, and its same old loved tones struck strong and true upon the air, the great orchestras and song melodies of a lifetime were forgotten, the wonderful modulations and blending of the Japanese gong downstairs vanished in an instant, the ache of the long weary years dropped away—and again



## THE OLD BELL

I stood beside grandfather on the front doorstep, my boy hand clutching the corner of his broadcloth coat, my little tummy rejoicing in anticipation of an early and adequate filling, my ears tingling with the reverberations of the old bell in those master-hands sending forth its clarion message of life and love and labor and a Thing Well Done.

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AFTER all, Romance and Fact are but twin children, hardly distinguishable one from the other, playing together in the clover-field of life.

The story of "The Old Bell" has had so interesting a *finis* that it seems proper to here append it, changing only names that would identify the persons mentioned.

Robert Spenner was the factotum around Grandfather Van Alstyne's place. He was combination gardener, hired man, mender of tools, path-clearer in winter, side-walk sweeper in summer and general utility man—a quaint character who might have stepped out of a Charles Dickens novel. When the Van Alstyne home was broken up and sold after the passing

## THE LONG AGO

of grandfather and grandmother, the bell which Grandfather Van had used so many years, was given to old Robert.

His daughter married and went with her husband to their farm in Kansas, where they prospered abundantly.

Subsequently, about 1879, old Robert was lured to the Black Hills by the gold discoveries there, and stopped enroute to visit his daughter and her husband, Mr. Prince, on their Kansas farm. He carried the old bell, his treasured keep-sake—to which Mr. Prince took a great fancy, and induced old Robert to leave it on the farm. There it has remained for 40 years, in daily use around the house.

The author of THE LONG AGO and his mother, surviving members of the Van Alstyne household, lost all track of the old bell after it was given to Spenner, and heard nothing of him or the bell for nearly half a century. In 1916, when the first edition of THE LONG AGO was published, a copy was sent to Mrs. Buckman, a school-girl and lifelong friend of the author's mother. Mrs. Buckman was then under the care of a trained nurse, Miss Nevin,

## THE OLD BELL

to whom she loaned a copy of the book and supplemented its stories with some of her own personal reminiscences, among them Grandfather Van Alstyne's custom of ringing the old bell.

By one of those interesting coincidences with which life sometimes plays surprising pranks upon its children, Miss Nevin chanced to be the niece of Mr. Prince—and when she related the incident to her mother, she was told that the Old Bell was still in existence, and in daily use on the farm of Miss Nevin's uncle. She immediately wrote to Mr. Prince, and at the same time Mrs. Buckman wrote to the author, telling him of the strange discovery of the Old Bell.

Correspondence followed between Mr. Prince and the author—and one glad April morning there was delivered to the author a wooden box containing the dear old bell . . . “Yes, the selfsame bell that my boy hands struggled with, strangely come back to me after all these years and cherished beyond any other single earthly possession of mine.”

It stands on the mantel of my private office

## THE LONG AGO

today, beside the old-time India ink portrait of its master-ringer of the long ago—proclaiming the generosity and renunciation of him who has loved it and used it for 40 years—keeping ever alive the memory of him whose arm swung it daily at the front door through the half-century that it sent forth its message of “life and love and labor and a Thing Well Done”—and a priceless heritage to the little boy who can “still feel grandfather’s presence on the doorstep, the texture of his wonderful broadcloth coat, the precious comfort of his knees and encircling arms, and the quietness and glory of his upright, unafraid and unselfed life.”



## When Day is Done

**I**F the page blurs, as it may do if you were ever a child and if you have been tempered in the cruel furnace of the years, maybe the mists that fill the eyes will bathe the soul of you in their hallowed flood until the world-ache is soothed, and you can start up the big road again with some of the same wonderful exultation that sped you onward and forward in the Long Ago . . . One touch of that, and the burden of Today, grown great in the years of struggle, slips from your shoulders as lightly as the wild-rose petal drops upon the bosom of the stream and floats away to the music of the ripples.

Only a strong man can go back over the Old Road to the beginning-point—facing the memories that throng the path—meeting the surging emotions that sweep away all our carefully-laid defenses—braving the grim spectre that puts the white seal of age upon our heads.

## THE LONG AGO

Once more, in the cool of the late twilight, we'll sit with chin in hand on grandfather's front steps and watch the stars come out . . . and hear the loon calling weirdly across the water . . . and catch the perfume of the lilacs and narcissus from the garden . . . and gather at grandmother's knee to feel her soft fingers in our curls and hear her bedtime story. Half asleep, but ever reluctant, we will trudge stumblingly to the little room with its deep feather bed, and get into our red-flannel nightie. Down on our knees, with our face in the soft edges of the mattress and tiny hands uplifted, we will say our prayers, and end them in the same old way: "God bless father and mother, and grandfather and grandmother . . . and ev-ery-body . . . else in . . . the world . . . amen . . ." and feel those strong mother-arms lifting our sleepy form into the downy depths.

Never until now have we known the reality of the boy-days, or paused to receive their hallowed touch.

Grandfather and grandmother, and the garden, and the river, and the song of the robin

## WHEN DAY IS DONE

in the apple-tree, and all the myriad experiences of the boy-time, are glorified now as never before. In the halcyon Then they were but incidents of the day; in the mellowed Now we learn the truth of them, and catch their wondrous meaning.

The flower blossoms are gleaming as colorful and fragrant today as they did in the Long Ago. The bird-songs are as tuneful now as they were then. The sun is shining just as golden and as genial this moment as it did when we sat on the beams of the mill-race and felt on our faces the spray of tumbling waters sun-warmed in the air.

We need only open our hearts and let the sun-shine in!

And Youth and Age, blended and rejoicing, will go hand in hand along the path of life to its far goal bestowing upon us all the freshness of the dew-damp morning, all the vigor of the strenuous noon, and all the peace and calm assurance of the star-lit night.







## The Yellow Rose

WITH what strange hand does Chance, or Destiny, sweep the chord of Life to awaken its harmonies!

When they "packed my trunk and sent me off to college" the Yellow Rose, all thorn-covered, was forgotten—for in youth all our wonderful Yesterdays are blotted-out by the glare of alluring Tomorrows.

From that long-ago day until now, and in wanderings far and wide, there has never come into my life another yellow rose-bush of its kind. I recall that it was a plebeian, little esteemed even by The Garden's charitable mistress, and it seemed to have retreated, with characteristic modesty, into the oblivion which shrouds many extinct blossoms of the past.

But yesterday morning, scarcely one sunset behind the joyous return of the Old Bell, upon my desk was a Yellow Rose, left by unseen hands. Just one full-blown blossom upon its

## THE LONG AGO

short, thorny stem, and a few tight-folded buds, and over-much foliage of tiny, dark-green leaves. In form, it was identical with that loved bush of Boyhood—but it seemed too wonderful to be real! Yet there, on the mantel, stood the Old Bell, and its never-forgotten tone was still ringing from the stroke of my knuckle upon its edge only a few hours ago. So, reverently and almost fearfully, I lifted the yellow blossom to my face—and instantly Doubt fled as the peculiar and unforgettable fragrance, all its own, swept away the years . . . “and I stood again where the Yellow Rose, all thorn-covered, lifted its sunny top above the picket fence, plucked its choicest blossom, put it almost apologetically and ashamed into the buttonhole of my jacket, stuffed my hands into my pockets and went whistling down the street, with the yellow rose-tint and the sunlight and the curls on my child head all shining in harmony.”

So wonderfully does Chance, or Destiny, time its work!

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As strangely as the old bell returned to me

## THE YELLOW ROSE

—as sweetly as my first flower-love came back and filled the office with its sunshine that April morning—so Life itself was restored. In its new touch was Something that brought back the deep blue to the evening sky, that again exhaled the perfume from the spring-time violet-beds, that sounded once more the clarion lilt of the meadow-lark on his post, and awakened all the loved voices that had so thrilled me before the Night dropped down.

And so, dear Unnamed Dream Child of mine, silent comrade of the unremembered Long Ago, the blessed Now and the Forever After, whose unknown hand found my Yellow Rose and laid it here to greet me, in deepest gratitude this book is dedicated. My gift is offered without apology—for whatever the craftsmanship, it carries to you the fragrance of the choicest flower in all the great Garden of Life.

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HERE THE BOOK ENDS.  
THE STORY, PERCHANCE,  
GOES ON. NOT ALL THE  
THINGS YOU REMEMBER  
ARE HERE SET DOWN,  
FOR IF THEY WERE IT  
WOULD BE MY BOOK—  
AND IT WAS MEANT TO  
BE YOURS. IF THESE  
PAGES HAVE STIRRED  
DEAR MEMORIES SO THAT  
YOU MAY GO ON WITH  
THE STORY—YOUR STORY  
—IT IS ENOUGH. . . .



















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